

Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District

Detroit Lakes, Minnesota
Fiscal Year 2001

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Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District FY 2001 Annual Narrative Report

Introduction

Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District is located in Northwestern Minnesota and includes the counties of Becker, Clay, Mahnomen, Norman, and Polk. The District currently manages 40,089 fee title acres on 165 individual Waterfowl Production Areas. In addition, the District administers 322 perpetual wetland easements totaling approximately 11,500 acres, 17 FmHA easements totaling 1,794 acres, and four habitat easements totaling 238 acres. The District is bordered on the west by the flat Red River Valley Flood plain and by the rolling hardwood forest - lake region to the east. The primary economic base of the area is agriculture, with a strong tourism industry centered around area lakes. The headquarters is near the town of Detroit Lakes in the southern portion of the District.

The rolling prairie zone and associated wetlands of this District, located between glacial Lake Agassiz beach line and the western periphery of the hardwood forest, have not been spared from agricultural development. The tall grass prairie, most of the prairie wetlands, and much of the timberland have been converted to crop production.

The purpose of the Wetland District is to provide quality waterfowl production habitat through the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program and subsequent quality wetland and native grassland restorations.

Highlights

Native prairie grasses and forbs were restored on 631 acres of Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs), (Section 2b), and 172 acres of private land (Section 2d).

Twenty prescribed burns were conducted, totaling 2,786 acres (Section 3f).

District staffing increased with the addition of a Prescribed Fire Specialist (Section 3f).

On March 10, the District conducted a forum that was designed to provide information about the various agency conservation programs available for landowners who want to improve their property for wildlife (Section 8b).

The third annual Waterfowl Expo was held on August 25. An estimated 175 visitors attended the Expo and learned about many components of waterfowl hunting and District management (Section 8a).

One fee title tract of 40 acres, and 3 easements totaling 308 acres were purchased during FY 2001 (Section 6h).

Biological Technicians Sprenger and Charland moved on to permanent full-time positions within the Service. These two excellent employees will be long term assets to the Service and the Refuge System (Section 9b).

Climate Data

The winter had normal temperatures by Minnesota standards. Fall 2000 and late summer 2001 rains contributed to annual precipitation totals which were above average by 5 to 7 inches in various parts of the District.

It is a 80+ mile span between the north and south boundary of the District. Due to variations in climate over this distance, weather information is obtained from both Crookston, MN (Table C.1) in the north and Fergus Falls, MN (table C.2) just to the south of our District. This information is obtained from the university of Minnesota Climate Information Center Website at <http://climate.umn.edu/cawap/monsum/0010.txt>.

Table C.1 FY2001 Monthly temperature and precipitation data for Crookston, MN

Month	Temperature (° Fahrenheit)				Precipitation (Inches)	
	High	Low	Month Average	Departure for Month	Month Total	Departure for Month
October	80	18	46.7	2.4	2.11	0.58
November	68	3	26.3	0.6	4.42	3.75
December	35	-20	0.5	-8.1	0.69	.04
January	40	-24	12.5	10.8	0.15	-0.36
February	29	-25	2.1	-5.8	0.34	-0.13
March	45	-3	23.2	0.6	.010	-0.68
April	82	20	42.4	1.5	1.69	0.23
May	87	37	58.1	3.2	2.38	-0.08
June	88	42	65.0	0.3	1.63	-1.82
July	90	40	70.1	0.4	4.34	1.56
August	96	39	70.8	3.0	4.81	1.93
September	95	33	59.3	2.5	2.55	0.18
					25.12	5.2

Table C.2 FY2001 Monthly temperature and precipitation data for Fergus Falls, MN

Month	Temperature (° Fahrenheit)				Precipitation (Inches)	
	High	Low	Month Average	Departure for Month	Month Total	Departure for Month
October	80	21	48.8	3.7	1.44	-0.30
November	67	4	27.6	-0.9	3.86	2.97
December	34	-28	0.9	-10.9	0.95	0.29
January	40	-21	14.8	9.3	0.72	-0.01
February	30	-24	3.1	-8.5	0.95	0.41
March	42	-4	22.6	-2.7	0.17	-0.96
April	83	21	43.1	1.0	5.45	3.33
May	93	37	59.3	3.4	2.49	-0.14
June	97	47	66.8	1.6	6.05	2.33
July	93	46	73.0	2.4	2.99	-0.28
August	95	46	72.2	3.8	1.41	-1.61
September	91	35	59.1	1.8	3.48	1.06
					29.51	7.09

1. Monitoring and Studies

1a. Surveys and Censuses

Four Square Mile Survey

Waterfowl production estimates for the District are based on the Four Square Mile Plot System developed by staff at the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center and now administered through the Habitat and Population Estimate Team (HAPET) office at Fergus Falls, MN. The District does extensive leg work to gather the field data, and HAPET does the evaluation. District breeding pair estimates for mallards increased from 33.3 K in 1999 to 45.0 K in 2000, and remained high at 45 K in 2001. However, blue-winged teal pairs were down from 29.9 K in 2000 to 10.1 K this year. And wood duck pair numbers also decreased from 14.3 K to 7.6 K. For all species combined, breeding pair numbers demonstrated a dramatic decrease over recent years (Figure 1.1). Total recruitment also declined significantly, but remained above the long term average (Figure 1.2).

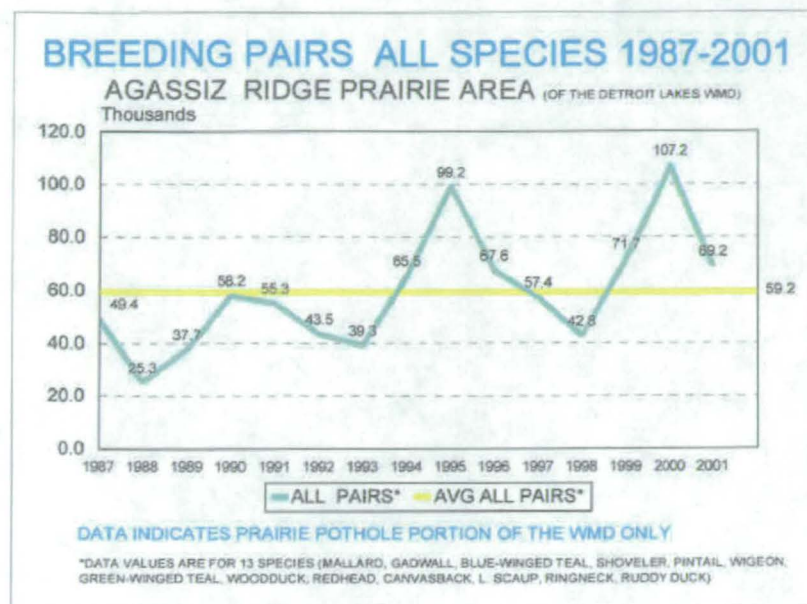


Figure 1.1 FY 2001 Breeding pair number on Detroit Lakes WMD, all species combined.

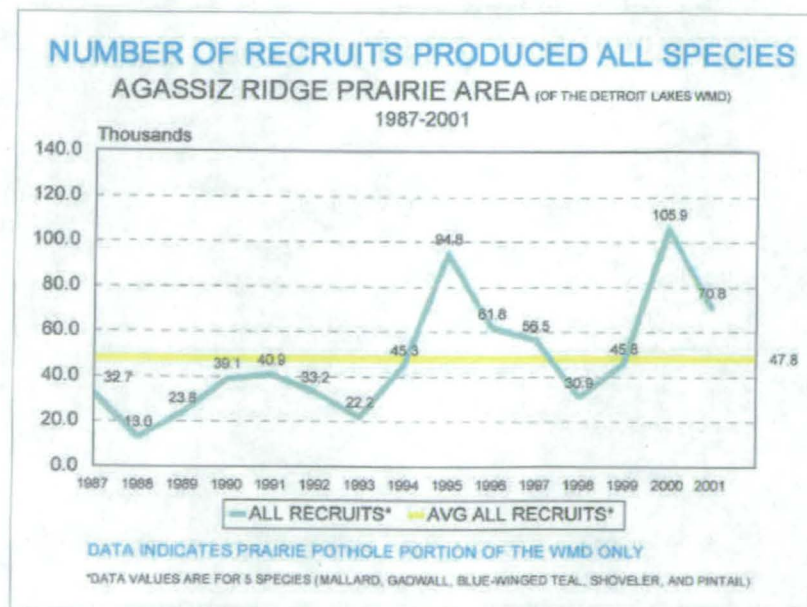


Figure 1.2 FY 2001 Total recruitment for Detroit Lakes WMD.

Grassland Bird Survey

Point count bird surveys were designed and conducted mid-late June 2001. Ten counts were conducted at Haugtvedt, Christianson, and Sagebraaten WPAs in Clay County. We hope to continue and expand this survey work in the future to examine grassland bird use on the District.

Predator Survey

The District participated in the MN DNR's Predator/Furbearer Scent Station Survey. Summary results have not been compiled by the DNR at this writing. Cursory observations by staff and trappers reflect the lowest fox and coyote populations in memory (still plagued by mange). Skunk and raccoon numbers seem to be up, while bobcat, wolf, mink, and fisher appear stable.

Ruffed Grouse Survey

Ruffed grouse drumming counts were down 13% in the NW portion of the District, and down 42% from 2000 in the remainder. Reproduction was poor with hunting opportunities diminished from recent years.

Waterfowl Phenology

Unlike 1999 and 2000, the early months of 2001 were more like "normal" and consequently waterfowl arrived back in the area roughly on schedule with the bulk of migration occurring the last week of March. There were ample brood water conditions throughout the summer and waterfowl production appeared good, with the exception of Canada geese. Fewer brood pods were observed in 2001. The nesting Canada goose issue, with its associated crop damage, continues to be a challenge for the District, DNR, and agricultural community.

Much to the dismay of local waterfowlers, the fall "migration" of both geese and ducks was more like a "dribble". Because of the warm fall the birds were not in a rush to go south. Birds were still passing through in December after the waterfowl season had ended.

Prairie Chickens and Pheasants

The remnant prairie chicken population in the District remained stable at roughly two to four thousand birds (MN DNR estimate). Because of several untimely blizzards, the pheasant population declined 59% in west central MN (based on August roadside DNR survey work). Note that the District is at the northern extreme of "pheasant country" in Minnesota and only Clay County has a viable population. However, within that county, survey results show a dramatic localized population increase of an estimated 400%.

Deer and Moose

The deer population had another relatively easy winter and whitetail populations improved in the district. Fawning rates for adult does remained high at 1.60, down slightly from the 1.64 in 2000 (average of Prairie and Big Woods Deer Management Units). Fawning rates for yearling

does was 0.12, down from 0.40 in 2000. The 2001 deer harvest increased 9 to 25% in various portions of the District. Moose numbers continue to decline in this portion of Minnesota.

1b. Studies and Investigations

Seeding Method Study

A study was initiated in June 2001 to compare success and diversity of native seedings done via drill or broadcast techniques. A test plot was established on the Maple Lake WPA to examine differences in species diversity, richness, density, and percent cover by using repeated measures analysis of variance. This will allow us to account for treatment differences as well as yearly variance. The study site was permanently marked with metal posts located with GPS coordinates. This will provide interesting and valuable long term information.

Fathead Minnow Control Study

Fathead minnows, although a native species, are at extremely high population levels due to high water and mild winters which have limited normal winter kill. The fish are found to compete with waterfowl for food resources and contribute to decreased water quality. The MN DNR initiated a pilot study this year to examine the role of rearing walleye (fingerlings or fry) in WPA wetlands as a potential tool to decrease fathead minnow densities. Preliminary results are encouraging.

2. Habitat Restoration

2a. Wetland Restoration: On-refuge

Nine wetland basins, totaling four acres, were restored on the Spring Marshes WPA in Becker County during the second week of October. Twelve basins totaling 10 acres were restored on Flora Lake WPA in Clay County during September

2b. Upland Restoration: On-refuge

District staff completed seeding 631.7 acres of native tallgrass prairie grasses and forbs on 14 WPAs. This took a considerable staff effort, but resulted in increased nesting habitat for waterfowl, other migratory birds, and resident wildlife. Table 2.1 Summarizes the 2001 prairie restoration efforts.

Table 2.1 FY2001 Native vegetation restoration on Waterfowl Production Areas

County	WPA /NWR	Seed Used (Lot Name)	Acres	Date
Becker	Anderson WPA (south east)	NPMix'00 UC	15.0	05-13-01
Becker	Dunham WPA	NPMix'00 UC	10.0	05-05-01
Becker	Headquarters WPA	NPMix'00 UC	10.0	05-28-01
Becker	Lage WPA	NPMix'00 UC	39.0	05-15-01
Becker	Tessman WPA)	NPMix'00 UC	8.5	05-12-01
Clay	Haugtvedt WPA (Sogn tract)	NPMix'00 UC	31.0	04-23-01
Clay	Haugtvedt WPA (Sogn tract)	NPMix'00 UC	85.0	06-05-01
Clay	Haugtvedt WPA (Sogn tract)	Indiangrass (Tomahawk)	20.0	06-06-01
Clay	Three Jetvig Lakes WPA	NPMix'00 UC	14.0	03-21-01
Mahnomen	Beaulieu Lake WPA	NPMix'00 UC	94.2	06-10-01
Mahnomen	Squirrel Lake WPA	NPMix'00 UC	18.0	04-13-01
Polk	Erskine WPA	NPMix'00 C	76.0	06-11-01
Polk	Maple Lake WPA	MS'00 UC Melvin Slough	34.0	04-02-01
Polk	Maple Lake WPA	MS'01 UC Melvin Slough	75.0	06-09-01
Polk	Maple Lake WPA (Test Plot)	NPM'01UC	2.0	06-23-01
Polk	Union Lake WPA	MS'01 C	5.0	06-26-01
Polk	Winger WPA	NPM'00 UC	55.0	03-28-01
Polk	Woodside WPA	NPM'00 UC	40.0	06-26-01
Total			631.7	

An explanation of the lot names in used in Table 2.1 is given below:

<u>Lot Name</u>	<u>Origin</u>
Native Prairie Mix '00 UC	Native Prairie Mix, harvested in year 2000. Uncleaned Seed (UC) Harvest site locations: Becker County: Helliksen Prairie WPA; Clay County: Jarvis WPA, Kenyon WPA, Melby WPA, Rustad Lake WPA; Mahnomen County: Rush Lake WMA
Native Prairie Mix '00 C	Native Prairie Mix, harvested in year 2000. Cleaned seed (C) Harvest site locations: Becker County: Helliksen Prairie WPA; Clay County: Jarvis WPA, Kenyon, Melby WPA, Rustad Lake WPA; Mahnomen County: Rush Lake WMA
Melvin Slough'00 UC	Melvin Slough Native Grasses and Forb seed Harvest in year 2000 Uncleaned seed (UC) Harvest Site: Polk County, Melvin Slough WPA
Indiangrass (Tomahawk)	Seed purchased from Kaste Seed Co., Fertile, MN Composite of three stands found in: Dickey Co., Sargent Co., SE North Dakota, and Marshall Co., NE South Dakota

Because of the very high germination quality, the bulk seeding rate for broadcast seeding was only 20.8 pounds per acre to achieve the desired 2,000,000 Pure Live Seeds (PLS) per acre or 45 seeds per square foot.

One hundred and thirty pounds of Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans* - tomahawk ecotype) was purchased and planted in a pure stand (Haugtvedt WPA). This area will serve as a future harvest site for this grass. This species will augment our seed mix in which it is typically lacking. Harvest times typically target the ripeness of big bluestem, and Indiangrass is not yet ripe.

Maintenance of Restorations

Successful restoration is dependent to some extent on the control of cool season competition and weeds until the natives become established. Virtually all such control is done via mechanical (cutting) means in order to reduce non-target effects of herbicides (e.g. spraying for thistle and killing the forbs just establishing). This post-seeding mowing for establishment purposes may occur for as many as three years on a given restoration. This work is a priority effort for the

District as weed management is of great concern to the local agricultural community. No chemical control was conducted in 2001. A summary of mowing efforts are listed in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 FY 2001 Post-seeding mowing efforts

WPA Unit Name	Acres	Date
Woodside	67	6/25
Spring Marsh	88	6/28
Matter	117	6/29
Rustad Lake	25	7/11
Union Lake	36	7/12
Manitoba Junction	63	7/13
Nelson Prairie	75	7/13
Winger	55	7/13
3 Jetvig Lakes	23	7/17
Mee	64	7/17
Shodean	10	7/18
Matter	77	7/30
Maple Lake	110	7/31
Spring Marsh	96	8/01
Winger	55	8/08
Beaulieu Lake	94	8/10
Erskine	76	8/15
	1131	

Native Prairie Grasses and Forb Seed Harvest - Fall 2000

To provide a seed source for our annual upland restoration work, the District contracts custom combining on selected prairie areas. During August and September, 30,683 bulk (uncleaned) pounds of native prairie grass and forb seed were harvested. All of the seed was dried, bagged and stored for use next year. The FY2000 harvest sites are listed below.

<u>Harvest Site Name</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>County</u>
Fuglie Waterfowl Production Area	USFWS	Clay
Coburn Wildlife Management Area	MN DNR	Mahnomen
Felton Prairie Wildlife Management Area	MN DNR	Clay
Wambac Wildlife Management Area	MN DNR	Mahnomen

2c. Wetland Restoration: Off-refuge

Forty-seven basins totaling 53 acres were restored on 6 farms as noted below.

Table 2.3 FY 2001 Private land wetland restorations.

Name	County	# Basins	Acres
Johnson, Jeff	Clay	9	12.0
Guetter, Randy	Becker	6	4.0
Zick, Gene	Becker	3	3.2
Cole, John	Mahnomen	9	4.5
Faulkman, Lee	Polk	7	14.6
Bachman, Brad	Becker	13	14.7
		47	53.0

2d. Upland Restoration: Off-refuge

District staff assisted five private landowners with the seeding of 141 acres of native prairie vegetation. In addition, 35 acres were also seeded on three different school district properties for the purpose of providing outdoor teaching classroom/laboratory sites. These sites included the Horace May Elementary School in Bemidji, Central Middle School in East Grand Forks, and Win-E-Mac High School in Erskine. Private upland restoration activity is summarized below.

Table 2.4 FY 2001 Private upland restoration accomplishments

Landowner	County	Acres
Bachman, Brad	Becker	52.0
Guetter, Randy	Becker	17.0
Yliniemi, Hazel A.	Becker	2.1
Paakh, Bruce	Becker	57.1
VanValkenburg, Michael	Becker	13.0
Horace May Elementary School	Beltrami	10.0
East Grand Forks Middle School	Polk	15.0
Win-E-Mac School	Polk	5.0
		171.2

Successful restoration is dependent to some extent on the control of cool season competition and weeds until the natives can become established. Virtually all such control is done via mechanical (cutting) means in order to reduce non-target effects of herbicides. This post-seeding mowing for establishment purposes may occur for as many as three years on a given restoration. This work is shown in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 Post-seeding management mowing on private land restorations.

Location	Acres	Date
Guetter Farm	10	6/20
Guetter Farm	15	8/07
Total	25	

3. Habitat Management

3a. Manage Water Levels

Above average precipitation and a healthy beaver population continue to combine in a “problematic” way for managing water levels and keeping township roads and adjacent cropland above water. Many hours were spent keeping water control structures open and flowing. Two dams had to be removed via explosives on Sollie Enterprises WPA and Nelson Prairie WPA. An additional Clemson Leveler was installed on Fuglie WPA.

3c. Graze, Mow, Hay

Grazing was utilized on 53 acres of the 395 acre Squirrel Lake WPA in Mahanomen County. This management tool was utilized to encourage further development of warm season natives previously seeded into crop stubble or inter-seeded in sod. Grazing pressure was on the cool season grasses. Temporary electric fences were utilized to confine livestock to specific areas.

Forage removed totaled 72.1 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) or (2,163 Animal Unit Days) with grazing occurring on two paddocks of an eight paddock system. The fee for this grazing (reduced due to the many special conditions which included rotating the animals to the permittee’s adjacent home pasture eight different times) was \$00.10/AUDs or \$3.00/AUMs totaling \$216.30.

In 1996, the District started a new private land grazing initiative which is similar to the private land grazing programs conducted by the Service and Ducks Unlimited in Region 6. The difference being that instead of reimbursing landowners for cross fencing pastures into three or more paddocks, we provide the fencing material for them to construct the fence. The conditions of the program require the property owners to follow an approved Grazing Management Plan for 10 years. In 2001, we still had only two persons in the program; one in Clay County having 133 acres with a five-paddock system, and one in Mahanomen County having 38.3 acres with a four-paddock system. The program is designed to encourage landowners to maintain pastureland in a condition that would be of benefit to nesting waterfowl.

3d. Farming

The District has an active and intensive farming program which is utilized to prepare a weed-free and compacted seed bed for the successful planting of native grasses and forbs. The farming program is handled administratively in two different ways, one being with Special Use Permits (SUPs), and the second being Cooperative Farming Agreements (CFAs).

Table 3.1 FY 2001 Farming program on Detroit Lakes WMD.

County	Unit	Acres Farmed	Agreement	Rent
Becker	Marks WPA	230	SUP	00.00
Becker	Stinking Lake WPA	2	CFA	00.00
Clay	Doran Lake WPA	88	CFA	880.00
Clay	Hillestad WPA (Not Farmed in 2001)	30	CFA	00.00
Clay	Kenyon WPA (Not farmed in 2001)	34	CFA	00.00
Clay	Noreen	184	CFA	1,840.00
Clay	Sieh WPA	110	CFA	00.00
Mahnomen	Mee WPA	44	CFA	132.00
Norman	Slininger WPA	128	CFA	1,280.00
Polk	Galland WPA	30	CFA	00.00
Polk	Vesledahl WPA	308	CFA	00.00
Total:	-----	-----	-----	4,132.00

Due to wetness problems in 2001, some of the WPAs were not farmed and the rent was not required. Another scenario that results in a "no rent paid" situation occurs in the farmer's last year on a site, and instead of paying rent, he pays to have the site sprayed with Roundup herbicide the following spring prior to seed down with natives by the District. Other rent reductions are given for the planting of Roundup ready soybeans.

3f. Prescribed Burning

Prescribed Fire Utilized on 2,786 Acres

Persistence was the ingredient needed to achieve 70% of prescribed fire goals on the District during April and May. By taking advantage of every possible burning opportunity, the burn crew at the District was able to complete 20 prescribed burns totaling 2,786 acres.

Table 3.2 Detroit Lakes WMD Rx burn accomplishments 2001

2001 Detroit Lakes WMD Prescribed Fire Accomplishments			
County	Unit Name	Acres Burned	Date
Becker	Anderson WPA	40	05/11/01
	Axberg Lake WPA East	80	05/16/01
	Bakken WPA North	78	05/02/01
	Balke Lake WPA	240	05/13/01
	Bay Lake WPA	85	05/12/01
	Brandy Lake WPA	180	05/18/01
	Buchl WPA	220	05/16/01
	Dunham WPA	20	05/04/01
	Headquarters WPA	65	05/04/01
	Helliksen Prairie - Cty Land	160	04/30/01
	Lage WPA	88	05/14/01
	Lee Marshes WPA SE	40	04/30/01
	Marks WPA	80	05/12/01
	Syverson WPA	71	05/30/01
	Westbury WPA	35	05/12/01
	Lee Marshes WPA E	160	05/13/01
	Tessman WPA	90	05/11/01
Clay	Eide WPA	110	05/14/01
	Fuglie WPA	555	05/10/01
	Tattie Exchange	169	05/17/01
Mahnomen	Squirrel Lake WPA	220	05/17/01
Total Acres		2786	

Steve Schumacher of J. Clark Salyer NWR was selected for the District Prescribed Fire Specialist position in July.

The District prepared a Rural Fire Assistant Grant application with the Detroit Lakes RFD. The application yielded a grant of \$9,709.00 for the fire department.

The station's Fire Management Plan was completed during 2001. It was signed October 16, 2002.

On March 2, ROS Larry Hanson helped teach the S-130 and S-190 fire courses for seasonal fire fighters at the University of Minnesota, Crookston. ROS Hanson instructed the 40 students about the scouting, patrolling, and communications aspects of prescribed burns and wildfires.



Spring Rx Fire on the Detroit Lakes WMD

3g. Control pest plants

The vast majority of our weed control efforts are of mechanical or biological type. Mechanical treatment targets primarily thistle, while biological control is used on purple loosestrife and leafy spurge. These efforts have been used for several years, and with the exception of the loosestrife program, have been very successful. This year we obtained and released a new loosestrife control agent, the root mining weevil (*Hylobius transversovittatus*). We also grew our own leaf eating beetles, *Galerucella* spp. on potted loosestrife plants in the maintenance area. We hope to expand these efforts next year.

On July 26, 2001, an insectary for seed head weevils (*Larinus minutus*) was established on Underdahl WPA in Polk County. This biological agent will be utilized in the future for control of spotted knapweed.

Table 3.3 FY2001 Mechanical weed control efforts, Detroit Lakes WMD.

Location	Acres	Date
Squirrel Lake	13	7/10
Headquarters	7	7/20
Lake Park	54	8/06
Total	74	

Table 3.4 FY2001 Biological control efforts for purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*).

Release Location	Biological Agent	Date
Helliksen Prairie WPA Becker Co. Spring Creek Twp., Sec. 30	4 pots of <i>Galerucella spp.</i>	07-12-01
Pederson WPA Becker Co., White Earth Twp., Sec. 30	4 pots of <i>Galerucella spp.</i>	07-12-01
Downing WPA Mahnomen Co., Popple Twp., Sec.30	4 pots of <i>Galerucella spp.</i>	07-12-01
Emily Bellimore farm Becker Co., Spring Creek Twp., Sec. 25	4 pots of <i>Galerucella spp.</i>	07-12-01
Kathleen Johnson farm Becker Co., Spring Creek Twp., Sec. 25	4 pots of <i>Galerucella spp.</i>	07-12-01
Helliksen Prairie WPA Becker Co. Spring Creek Twp., Sec. 30	1000 Adult <i>Hylobius spp.</i>	08-09-01

Table 3.5 FY 2001 Biological control efforts for leafy spurge (*Euphorbia escula*).

Release Location	# of Insects	Comments	Date
Arneson WPA Becker Co., Detroit Twp., Sec. 14	10,000	Small stand of leafy spurge present	07-23-01
Headquarters WPA Becker Co., Detroit Twp., Sec. 15	5,000	Small stand of leafy spurge present, No sign of beetles released in 2000	07-23-01
Christianson WPA Clay Co., Lake Park Twp., Secs. 9 & 10	10,000	Beetles appear absent after yr. 2000 release. Strong stand of spurge present upon 2001 release	07-23-01
Hitterdahl WPA Clay Co., Goose Prairie Twp. Sec. 33; Highland Grove Twp., Sec. 5	10,000	Beetles appear to be absent upon yr 2000 release and stand seems smaller than in yr 2000 release date	07-23-01

4. Fish & Wildlife Management

4a. Bird banding

Due to the increased controversy surrounding resident Canada goose populations, the Non-Metro Giant Canada Goose Research Committee drafted a proposal to intensify Canada goose banding efforts to help provide the data needed to address the management concerns of Wetland Management Districts and MN DNR area wildlife managers. District staff coordinated summer banding efforts with the local MN DNR office. Efforts in Becker and Clay Counties resulted in 931 birds being banded.



A few of the record 931 Canada geese banded in 2001

4d. Nest Structures

Structures were checked and maintained during the winter of 2000-01. Therefore, the documented success is for the 2000 nesting season. The success rate of our nest basket program again remained high. We had some high water and ice damage again, but still had 130 operable baskets. Of those baskets, 80 brought off broods for a 62% basket success rate. Again, no nest predation was noted, but a disappointing 9 (18%) of the unsuccessful baskets had abandoned mallard nests. Six of the abandoned mallard nests were in units that had prescribed burns conducted that spring. Three baskets produced double clutches of mallards and two produced double clutches of geese. Cumulative totals for the 80 successfully utilized baskets were 44 mallard and 41 Canada goose nests.

Until we can finish moving some of the traditionally unsuccessful baskets, our percentage of use will likely remain fairly stable. For the first time successful basket use by mallards and Canada geese is nearing 50/50. It is time to research a simple barrier to exclude geese from the baskets since mallards are our target species and on some areas geese seem to be displacing or harassing mallards and preventing their nesting efforts. In addition, Canada geese and their tendency to utilize adjacent agricultural crops as "browse" has generated some significant local concern about additional goose production. Table 4.1 depicts the percent of successful baskets over the last 10 years.

Table 4.1 Percent of Detroit Lakes WMD nest baskets that hatched broods 1991 - 2000

Year	% success
2000	62
1999	65
1998	54
1997	67
1996	60
1995	52
1994	45
1993	26
1992	12
1991	6



ROS Hanson conducting nest basket maintenance

5. Coordination Activities

Interagency Coordination

District staff continued to work closely with Farm Service Agency offices throughout the 5 county area. We reviewed six inventory properties totaling 1537 acres. One conservation easement of 17 acres was recommended.

Norman County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Norman SWCD received technical assistance and native seed from the District to facilitate the implementation of a grazing system on their Conservation Park demonstration area. The SWCD will utilize the 52 acre, five paddock grazing system to show producers how livestock can be used in the establishment of warm season stands. This is a technique we have successfully used on our Squirrel Lake WPA in Mahnomen County.

MN DNR Raised Walleye Fingerlings in WPA Wetlands:

Detroit Lakes Area Minnesota DNR staff harvested more than 81,000 walleye fingerlings from Type V wetlands on five WPAs in 2001. In a spirit of interagency cooperation, the MN DNR has been permitted to stock and rear walleye fry in certain wetlands on several WPAs in the District for a number of years. The fish are harvested as fingerlings and used to stock local Minnesota walleye fishing lakes.

Table 5.1 FY 2001 Walleye Production, Detroit Lakes WMD Wetlands

WPA	County	Lbs. of Fingerlings	# of Fingerlings
Axberg Lake	Becker	1,593	20,709
Severson Lake	Becker	487	14,610
Christianson	Clay	218	5,014
Doran	Clay	1,065	13,845
Rustad Lake	Clay	2,297	26,937
Tatlie	Clay	20	144
	Totals	5,680	81,259

Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society

District Manager Chase was asked to serve, and was subsequently elected to the Board of Directors for the MNPCS. The MNPCS has been instrumental in the transplanting of chickens from the DLWMD area to the Lac qui Parle (Morris WMD/Big Stone NWR) area.

The prairie chicken has become a wonderful unifying force in western Minnesota, bringing together diverse groups of public and private entities concerned with the chicken's future and prairie conservation. Service personnel from Agassiz NWR, Detroit Lakes WMD, Fergus Falls WMD, Morris WMD, and Big Stone NWR work cooperatively with NGOs, academia, local governments, landowners, the MN DNR, and others in this *bona fide* "ecosystem" project of conservation.

Road Inventory

In November 2001, ROS Barker met with Jason Doolittle of the U. S. Department of Transportation. Information was provided so that the Federal Highway Administration could conduct a formal road inventory and condition assessment of District roads and parking lots.

Natural Resources Building Committee

The District was represented on the Natural Resources Building Committee during the year. The committee, which consisted of staff from the Minnesota DNR, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil & Water Conservation District, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Fish & Wildlife Service, and two sportsman's clubs, was responsible for maintaining the Natural Resources Building that is located at the Becker County Fair grounds.

Pine to Prairie Birding Trail

Biologist Les Peterson represented the District on the Pine to Prairie Birding Trail steering committee. The committee, which consisted of staff from five northwestern Minnesota Visitor and Convention Bureaus, four National Wildlife Refuges, two WMDs, the Lakes Area Birding Club, the Minnesota Office of Tourism, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources met regularly throughout the year to plan, promote, and secure funding for Minnesota's first official birding trail.

Becker County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Biologist Les Peterson represented the Service on the Becker County Comprehensive Plan steering committee. The committee consisted of representatives from Federal, State, and local agencies, organizations, business interests, and individuals who reside in Becker County. The committee met several times throughout the year to develop a policy framework that Becker County can use as a guide when dealing with development and land use activities in the county during the next 20 years. Representation on the Committee gives the Service a chance to provide input into how Becker County should deal with issues such as natural resources management, rural and lakeshore development, economic development and land use, and transportation and public infrastructure.

Giant Canada Goose Research Committee

In December, Manager Mark Chase participated in a meeting of the Non-Metro Giant Canada Goose Research Committee that was sponsored by the MN DNR. The committee discussed issues concerning the resident Canada goose populations in rural Minnesota. The research team drafted a proposal to intensify Canada goose banding efforts to help provide the data needed to

address the management concerns of Wetland Management Districts and MN DNR area wildlife managers.

Cedar Creek Prescribed Burning Workshop

On January 29, ROS Larry Hanson participated in a Prescribed Burning Workshop at the University of Minnesota's Cedar Creek Natural History Area in North Anoka County. Those attending the workshop included staff from the University of MN, Cedar Creek, MN DNR, East Bethel Fire Department, and the Service. The workshop members reviewed the Cedar Creek Natural History Area's fire program and gave recommendations to make the program safer and more effective.

Becker/Mahnomen Pheasants Forever

ROS Barker attended a meeting of the newly formed Becker and Mahnomen County chapter of Pheasants Forever on March 26. District management was discussed, as well as our stance on food plots, evergreen plantings, and the permitted use of feeders during winter months on WPAs. Emphasis was placed on partnering money to do upland and wetland restoration on private land adjacent to existing WPAs or WMAs to maximize habitat block size and benefitting both waterfowl and pheasant populations.

Red River Valley Flood Reduction Planning

Project Teams (PT) were formed within individual Watershed Districts as a result of the 1998 Mediation Agreement. The Project Teams serve in an advisory capacity to the individual Watershed District's Board of Managers. Within the PT, various agencies (e.g. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and conservation organizations) are brought together in the project planning and development phase to address both flood control benefits and natural resource benefits.

Staff from the District are active members on three Watershed District Project Teams that fall within the WMD. District Manager Mark Chase is a member of the Wild Rice River PT, ROS Jason Barker is on the Buffalo/Red River PT, and Biologist Les Peterson represents the Service on the Sand Hill River PT. The PT identifies flood damage reduction and natural resources enhancement goals, guides comprehensive watershed planning, reviews proposed flood reduction projects, advances the permitting process, and facilitates conflict resolution to prevent the institutional gridlock that has commonly happened in the past.

A summary of individual PT progress is as follows:

Wild Rice Watershed

Planning efforts continued on a basin-wide scale to find cooperative solutions to flood damage problems and enhance natural resource values within the basin, consistent with the Mediation Agreement. The WR Watershed Board of Managers hired Houston

Engineering to lead the “Systems Approach” planning effort. The PT set goals, identified issues, identified priority areas for flood damage reduction projects and natural resource enhancements, identified measurable outcomes, identified monitoring indicators, and is working on a list of potential projects.

Sand Hill River Watershed

The Sand Hill River FRT is actively working on the Maple Creek flood control proposal. This project involves off-channel water storage along with wetland restorations and storage capability at the upper end of the watershed. The team is also looking at two wetland restorations that would provide some flood water control and enhanced wildlife habitat potential. Efforts were also spent on the ongoing Union/Sarah Lakes pumping project and fish passage on the Sand Hill River.

Buffalo-Red River Watershed

The project team has developed the Whiskey Creek Tributaries Project to address serious drainage/flooding concerns northwest of Barnesville, MN. Project design is multi-faceted and includes channel restoration and buffer strips (both east and west tributaries), setback levies, off-stream dry impoundment storage in section 14, and wetland restorations in sections 10 and 21.

Another concern to the Project Team is portions of Spring Prairie and Cromwell Townships (Figure 5.1). Severe erosion is occurring in Clay County Ditch No. 39, and further upstream in the natural channel (head cutting). The goal of the group is to examine the upstream drainage area (shown in red) and the best management practices available as it is essential to determine the causes of the disequilibrium conditions before designing restoration methods for an unstable river.

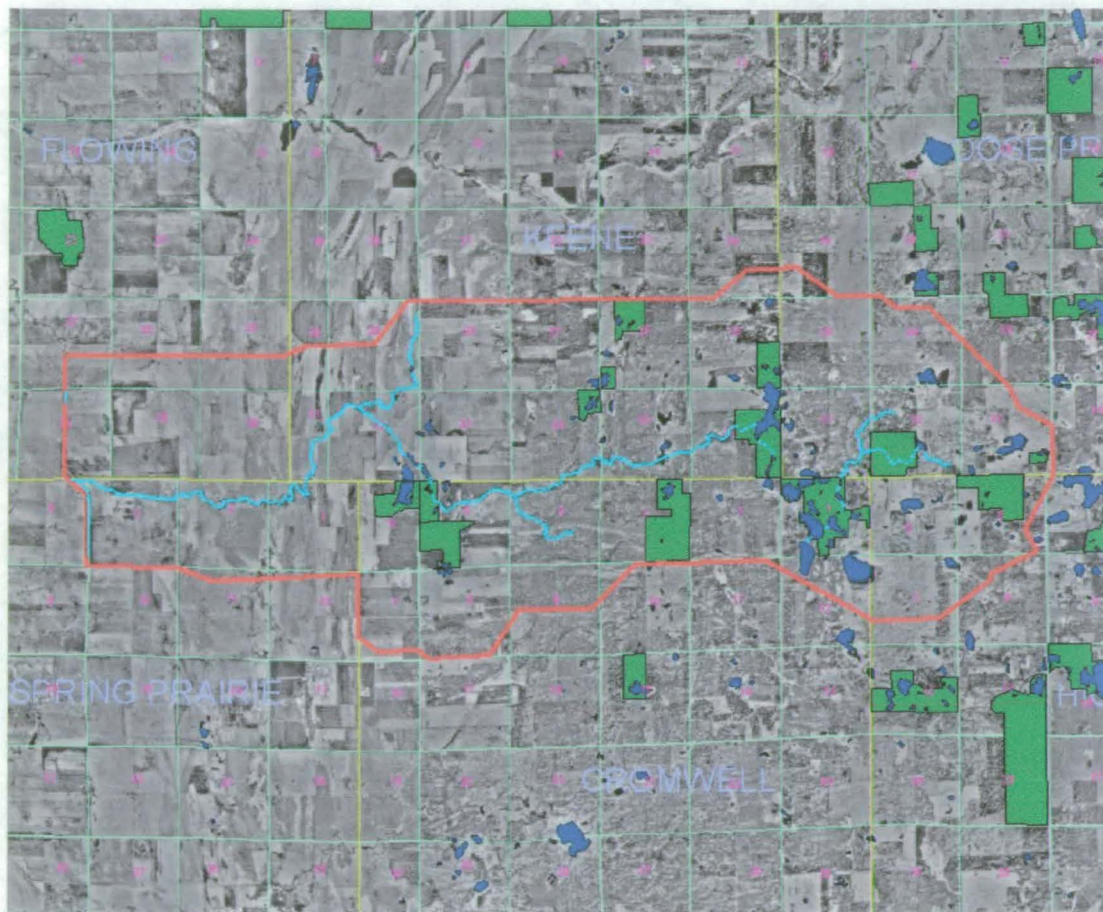


Figure 5.1 Spring Prairie Twp. Project Team Focus Area

Resource Protection

6a. Law Enforcement

Wildlife Law Enforcement

Most of the organized wildlife related law enforcement occurred during the waterfowl hunting seasons. Hunttable duck populations during October and November again appeared to be significantly lower in the District than normal, which frustrated many Minnesota waterfowl hunters. No hunting violations were discovered during the 2000 law enforcement patrols. Hunttable duck populations in September 2001, were much improved over the past several years and duck hunters were in the field in greater numbers. A warning was issued for hunting from a permanent blind on the Setter WPA and Violation Notices were issued for operating a motorized water craft on a WPA, littering, and leaving decoys overnight on public waters.

Three permanent blinds discovered on Setter WPA were removed.

Enforcement patrols and hunter surveys indicated that hunter use of WPAs during the white-tailed deer season was quite heavy. Some WPAs had as many as 10 hunters per day. No hunting violations were discovered.

Easement Enforcement

All of the WMD's 322 easements were aerially surveyed in November 2000 and again in April 2001. No new ditching violations were discovered during the flights. One violation was discovered during the summer through field investigations. This case was still under investigation at the end of FY01.

Easement Case Nears Resolution after 33 Years of Legal Battles

Since 1968, District staff has attempted to resolve the Lhotka easement violation case through voluntary compliance, criminal and civil court cases, and finally court ordered compliance. Finally, in October of 1992, 127 wetlands were restored on the easement property using Service equipment and personnel. The case was far from resolved. In 1994, the Lhotkas filed a civil action against the Service in an attempt to recover damages for trespass and damaging their property. During the next five years the case bounced back and forth from the Sixth District Court to the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. Ultimately, the District Court found in favor of the Service but the Circuit Court over-ruled it and instructed the District Court to determine if the impounded water in the wetlands was causing a nuisance or was trespassing on the property.

In an attempt to end the court battles, Assistant U.S. Attorney Lonnie Bryan proposed that the Lhotkas, the Service, and the Farm Services Agency participate in a mediation hearing to negotiate a settlement for the case. On February 29, 2000, the hearing was held in Duluth, Minnesota. After several hours of negotiations, Mr. Lhotka agreed to sell 678 acres of his property to the Service in return for writing off his Farm Services Agency debts, several years of unpaid taxes, and a \$10,000 Service lien on the property. This included 160 acres that were not covered by the easement and that contained numerous drained wetlands. He would be able to retain his house and ten acres around his building site. He also retained a use reservation through December 31, 2000, so they could receive a Conservation Reserve Program payment for 2000.

An independent appraiser, that would be agreed upon by both parties, was to be contracted to determine the fair market value of the property. The property would be converted into a WPA to be managed by the District. As with all WPA purchases, we would need to request certification from the Mahnomen County Commissioners. Mr. Lhotka was instructed by the court to encourage the Mahnomen County Board to certify the tract for sale to the Service.

In compliance with this court ordered agreement, an independent appraiser was contracted and Service Realty personnel began processing the paperwork needed to purchase the property from the Farm Services Agency. Mr. Lhotka refused to accept the appraisal of his property and also contacted the Mahnomen County Board of Commissioners to adamantly oppose the purchase of

the land by the Service. The Mahnomon County Commissioners are expected to rule on the land sale sometime before the end of 2001. It is anticipated that the Commissioners will not certify the sale and it will need to be presented to the Minnesota Land Exchange Board for certification. If the Land Exchange Board certifies the sale, the Service can proceed with the purchase, and resolution can finally come to this infamous easement case that has dragged on for more than 33 years.

Encroachment and Trespass Activities

With nearly 500 miles of WPA boundary and 1,500 neighboring landowners that surround the District's 165 WPAs, there is a constant backlog of violations including trespass farming, rock dumping, boundary sign damage, boundary disputes, and vehicle trespass that need to be investigated and resolved. Many of these cases are resolved through negotiation so additional legal action is not necessary. Violation Notices were issued for ATV trespass, loose dogs, and littering during the year. Warnings were issued for permanent hunting blinds, leaching, off-road travel, and loose dogs. Other incidents of encroachment, rock dumping, permanent deer stands, bait trapping, sign damage, abandoned property, and vehicle trespass were discovered during the year but remain under investigation.



ATV trespass on Flora Lake WPA

Snowmobile trespass on WPAs in the District continues to be a problem. Several WPAs, especially those that are located next to roads or trails that are heavily used by snowmobilers, received considerable snowmobile trespass. Snowmobile trespass occurred most often on the weekends when tourists flock into northwestern Minnesota for winter recreational activities. Enforcement staff shortages and insufficient funding needed to pay officers for weekend duty makes it difficult to effectively enforce the snowmobile trespass problems that are getting more prevalent each year. Ten warnings were issued for snowmobile trespass during the year.

Jenkins WPA Vehicle Trespass Meeting

On February 5, Biologist Les Peterson met with the Rosebud and Columbia Township boards and other interested individuals to discuss solutions to trespass problems associated with the jointly owned, dead end minimum maintenance road T-720 that runs along the east side of the Jenkins WPA in Polk County. In cooperation with neighboring landowner Robert Carlstrom, the Service had requested that the townships abandon .5 mile of Township Road 720. This road has not been maintained for many years and has contributed to a chronic vehicle trespass problem for the WPA and Mr. Carlstrom. The townships and most people in attendance were opposed to closing or abandoning the road but were willing to work with the Service to install a turn around at the north end of the road so visitors could easily turn around without traveling off the road onto Mr. Carlstrom's property or onto the WPA.

6b. Wildfire preparedness

The District continued to coordinate wildfire preparedness with the local MN DNR Forestry Division Office. Two known wildfires, totaling 16 acres occurred on the District lands in FY01.

Table 6.1 FY 2001 Wildfire Occurrence on Detroit Lakes WMD

Unit name	Acres	Date	Suppression Action by
Westbury WPA	5	5/11	MN DNR
Nelson Prairie WPA	11	7/13	Winger Fire Dept.

Tractor Operator Dave Davis went to Washington State on a two week fire assignment as a FFT2 on an interagency hand crew. Biologist Les Peterson was assigned to the Star Wildfire near Stockton, California for two weeks as a SEC1. He also worked on a security detail at the Carlos Edge Wildfire on and around the MN DNR Carlos Avery WMA from October 27 through November 1.

6c. Manage Permits & Economic Use

Union/Lake Sarah

The Union/Lake Sarah Improvement District (LID) continued to pump water from Union Lake in 2001. The LID has been operating under an emergency special use permit in order to reduce the lake level and alleviate property damages to lake-front property owners. By summer's end, the lake level was nearing the goal surface elevation of 1211.4 feet.

Throughout the year, the District and LID worked toward finding a more permanent solution. Some salient milestones follow:

- February 2001. The Union/Lake Sarah Improvement District applied for a Right-of-Way permit to maintain and operate the buried pipeline across Union Lake WPA. This request would allow the LID to maintain the line and discharge water into a WPA wetland.
- May 4, 2001. A public meeting was hosted by the LID in Erskine, MN. District staff gave a presentation explaining the process for issuing rights-of-way. Attendees were asked to identify the issues of concern and comment on potential alternatives. Approximately 60 people attended the meeting.
- Summer/Fall 2001. Manager Chase drafted an environmental assessment. By the end of the FY, the draft EA was set to be released for public comment on October 10, 2001.

Garden Valley Telephone Company - Fiber Optic Cable

Garden Valley Telephone Company requested a right-of-way permit to install an underground fiber optic cable through a portion of the Vesledahl WPA in Polk County. A right-of-way package was completed and a right-of-way permit was issued. Construction was completed during the summer of 2001.

Norman County Road Project

Manager Chase met with county commissioners and engineers on March 27, to discuss a Right-of-Way request from the county on CSAH 29 road expansion project. The county appeared eager to work with the District in complying with existing policies on mitigation and replacement of habitat.

The county applied for a Right-of-Way expansion. The District completed a compatibility determination and utilized the standard ROW Environmental Assessment, after which a ROW was issued on May 23, 2001. Suitable mitigation was being pursued as of the end of the fiscal year.

6h. Land Acquisition

A summary of acquisition work by county is listed below:

Becker County	A total of nine parcels were considered during the year. Two were forwarded to the Fergus Falls Wetland Acquisition office for habitat easement (233ac), two went forward for wetland easement (100ac), and three went forward for fee acquisition (1374ac). Two parcels were determined to be unsuitable for the small wetland acquisition program (SWAP) and were not sent on to Realty.
Mahnomen County	Three parcels were evaluated. One was sent forward for fee acquisition (200 ac), and two were rejected as they did not fit the SWAP.
Clay County	Seven parcels were considered this year. Four of them (391ac) were sent forward as fee acquisitions. The balance were rejected.
Norman County	Eight parcels were evaluated. Four totaling 840 ac were sent in for fee acquisition. The balance were rejected.
Polk County	Two parcels were evaluated. One parcel (120ac) was sent forward for fee acquisition.

In most instances, where a parcel of land offered by a willing seller was not suitable for the small wetland acquisition program, a more suitable alternative was provided to the prospective seller. Many times one of these landowners could be referred to the MN DNR as a potential buyer, or they were advised of RIM and other such programs. The following acquisitions were completed during the fiscal year:

Christensen, Jon	Wetland Easement	55 acres
Christensen, Jon	Habitat Easement	13.14 acres
Anderson, John	Fee	40 acres
Hutchinson, Mike	Wetland Easement	240 acres

Public Education and Recreation

8a. Provide Visitor Services

Awareness and Interest in Pine to Prairie Birding Trail Increasing

Awareness of and interest in the Pine to Prairie Birding Trail increased during the year as direct mailing information was sent to birders throughout the United States. Several news releases were issued, articles were published in local and regional media outlets, and the birding trail web site consistently received over 100 hits each month. The five cooperating community tourism bureaus reported that they received hundreds of requests for the birding trail brochure and were encouraged by the positive response to Minnesota's first official birding trail. The birding trail Steering Committee met throughout the year to work on strategies for long term funding, formalizing the committee into a non-profit organization, web site review, and promotion of the trail. The 230-mile birding trail was developed through a partnership of five northwestern Minnesota communities, four National Wildlife Refuges, two WMDs, the Lakes Area Birding Club, the Minnesota Office of Tourism, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Biologist Les Peterson represented the District on the committee, and the Headquarters and Helliksen Prairie WPAs were featured in the brochure.



Minnesota's first official birding trail

College Students Learn About WMD Management Programs

On October 1, Biologist Les Peterson presented the District's habitat management program to 25 Wildlife Ecology students from Minnesota State University, Moorhead during a class field trip to the Lofgren WPA in Clay County. The students learned about the District's upland and wetland acquisition and restoration programs, prescribed burning, seed harvesting and seeding

activities, and other management activities. The class was also presented with information on employment requirements and opportunities with the Service.

Grassland Diversity Stressed on Prairie Reconstruction Tours

Grass and forb species diversity is the key to providing good grassland habitat for birds and other prairie wildlife. This was the central theme of the programs presented by the ROS Larry Hanson during three prairie grassland restoration tours. On August 11, members of the Lakes Area Garden Club combined learning about prairie flowers and grasses with a scenic hayride through the Marks WPA. On August 15, ROS Hanson was a featured speaker and tour guide on a prairie reconstruction tour in Clay County that was sponsored by TNC and the MN DNR. Personnel from the DNR, TNC, Service, Prairie Restorations, Inc., and the Morris and Crookston campuses of the University of Minnesota were introduced to the techniques, benefits, and successes of broadcast seeding on snow covered sites in late winter and early spring. ROS Hanson also guided the group on a tour of WPAs where grassland areas had been reconstructed by this seeding method. On August 27, members of the Lakes Area Birding Club learned about prairie plant communities and the importance of forbs in wildlife habitat for insects and birds on a guided tour of native prairie and reconstructed native grasslands on the Anderson WPA in Becker County.



ROS Hanson advocates the value of native vegetation for wildlife to the Lakes Area Garden Club.

Fourth Graders Learn About Prairie and Wetlands

The Detroit Lakes WMD continued working with two fourth grade teachers from the Rossman Grade School in Detroit Lakes to provide natural resources related learning experiences for their students. On October 18, 44 fourth graders visited District headquarters to learn about the importance of wetlands and prairie grassland habitat to people and wildlife.

Waterfowl Expo

The third annual Waterfowl Expo was held at the District office from 9 am - 2 pm on Saturday, August 25. An estimated 175 visitors attended the Expo and learned about decoy placement, range estimation, retriever training, shotgun patterning, duck and goose calling, waterfowl identification, hunter education, and decoy carving. "Puddles" the Blue Goose was on hand to greet the visitors and was a big hit with kids of all ages. The event was co-sponsored by the Detroit Lakes WMD and the Minnesota Waterfowl Association.



Puddles makes friends at the Waterfowl Expo

Local and regional experts presented seminars about waterfowl hunting and waterfowl related topics. Justin Jahnz of the Minnesota Duck and Goose Callers Association, demonstrated duck and goose calling techniques. Jeff Lawrence, Waterfowl Biologist with the Minnesota DNR, addressed current waterfowl management issues in Minnesota such as population surveys, season dates and length, and an initiative to increase waterfowl hunting quality. Mark Greenig, local educator and well known decoy carver, transformed blocks of wood into decoys that were ready to be painted. Henry VanOfflen of the North Dakota Retriever Club presented tips on retriever training and demonstrated how trained retriever dogs can make waterfowl hunting more productive and enjoyable. Other accomplished waterfowl hunters were on hand to discuss waterfowl identification, decoy placement, shotgun patterning, and range estimation.



Demonstrations by the North Dakota Retriever Club were a popular Expo event



Kids preparing "masterpieces" for coloring contest

Teens and adults entered hunter class duck calling contests that were judged by a panel of duck calling experts from the Minnesota Duck and Goose Callers Association and Minnesota Waterfowl Association. The kids enjoyed the coloring contests, face painting, "Puddles" the Blue Goose, and feeding the live ducks and geese. This event would not have been possible without the help of numerous volunteers who donated their time before and during the event.

8b. Outreach

Landowner Forum

On March 10, about 45 Detroit Lakes area landowners attended a forum that was designed to provide information about the conservation programs that are available for landowners who want to improve their property for wildlife. The forum was co-hosted by Ducks Unlimited and the WMD. Representatives from Ducks Unlimited, MN Board of Soil and Water Resources, NRCS, and the Service presented information and answered questions about the conservation assistance programs that landowners could enroll their land in to provide improved wildlife habitat.

College Students Learn About Prairie Restoration

On October 2, ROS Larry Hanson presented a program on upland prairie restoration to 30 soil resources students at North Dakota State University, Fargo. The students learned about the District's innovative burning, seed harvest, and seeding programs. ROS Hanson gave the same program to a dozen members the NDSU Natural Resources Club at April 17, 2001.

Detroit Lakes Middle School Bird Project

On March 30, Biological Technician Paul Charland spoke with 250 7th graders at Detroit Lakes Middle School about the birds of Becker County and the importance of preserving and restoring prairie habitat for wildlife. The students learned about the Service's mission and the WMD's role of fulfilling the mission of the Service as it relates to wetlands and grasslands in the Prairie Pothole Region.

34th Annual Conservation Tour

On May 14, Biological Technician Paul Charland spoke to 185 Becker County 5th graders about the role of the Service and the District in protecting waterfowl and waterfowl habitat as part of the 34th Annual 5th Grade Conservation Tour. The students from Detroit Lakes, Callaway, and Waubun-Ogema learned about the National Wildlife Refuge System and WPAs and waterfowl within the Prairie Pothole Region. The site for the Tour was the Ike Fischer Farm east of Frazee, MN. The tour is organized by the Becker Soil and Water Conservation District.

District Staff Mentors Fourth Grade Students

In preparation for the annual Detroit Lakes Water Festival, Biological Technician Matt Sprenger met weekly with four Rossman Elementary School fourth graders during March and April to assist them in their study of prairies. The students learned about prairie and prairie values through library research, field trips to the Fergus Falls Wetland and Prairie Learning Center and

the Bluestem Prairie in Clay County, and interaction with Wetland District staff. The students used the information they learned to develop a display and demonstration that was presented at the third annual Detroit Lakes Water Festival that was held at the Northwest Technical College on May 8 & 9. The students gave nine presentations to an estimated 250 people during the two day festival. Their presentation explained the historic range of prairies, types of prairies, and plants and animals of the prairie. The students also conducted an experiment that demonstrated the value of grass cover in preventing soil erosion.

Minnesota Deer Hunters Association

Wetland District Manager Chase was the guest speaker of the Smokey Hills Chapter of MDHA meeting on June 8, 2001, in Frazee. Chase discussed the role of the District and how it is managed. Audience participation was excellent, spurring discussions about managing for/against trees, the Canada goose issue, and several general biology issues regarding wood ducks, bald eagles, and turkey vultures among other species. Thirty-four people attended the meeting including eight "forked-horns" who make up the youth component of MDHA.

Becker County Fair

The District staffed a booth in the Natural Resource Building at the Becker County Fair on August 15-18, 2001. There was a steady stream of traffic through the building for all four days. The booth featured the Partners for Wildlife program and had brochures covering a variety of topics about the WMD and the Service.



Boys looking for Kids Quiz answers at the Becker Co. Fair Wetland District booth

Conservation Field Day

Fourth graders from Detroit Lakes and Callaway schools visited the Cormorant Lakes Sportsman's club for a conservation field day at the end of September. In two days, ROS Barker met with over 150 students at the pond study station. Vegetation was examined along with extensive (and very muddy) dip netting of aquatic invertebrates. The students were very enthusiastic and amazed at the diversity of critters in a wetland system. An effort was made to interpret both the role of the District and the importance of "bugs" to our waterfowl production mission.



Cool! neat! gross! yuck! and eek! were some of the reactions to critters found in the pond

Planning and Administration

9a. Comprehensive management planning

Worked progressed slowly but surely on the CCP for the Minnesota Wetland Districts. A cooperative major rewrite was undertaken by the District Managers resulting in substantial changes to the EA and refinement of each District's objectives and strategies. More than 20 programmatic Compatibility Determinations were drafted to cover the most routine uses occurring on the WPAs throughout Minnesota.

Volunteer Program

WMD Volunteers Honored

On March 2, a dinner was hosted by the District staff to honor the volunteers who had contributed their time during FY1999 and 2000. Fifty volunteers contributed 3,037 hours in FY99 and 18 volunteers contributed 2,178 hours to the District in FY00. Volunteers worked on waterfowl surveys, wetland and upland restorations, prescribed burning preparation, WPA boundary posting, outreach, GIS digitizing, Waterfowl Expo preparation and activities, waterfowl and deer hunter surveys, locating illegal deer stands, and construction of public use facilities.

Volunteer District Rangers Dick Dahlin, Dennis Hunt, and Claude Mosher inspected nearly 200 miles of WPA boundaries and replaced more than 450 damaged or faded boundary signs. Volunteer Aimee Schmidt digitized the boundaries of more than 70 District WPAs on the Geographic Information System computer and provided valuable clerical and outreach assistance. John McGovern, Volunteer of the Year for FY98, continued to provide valuable support with the seed harvesting and cleaning, prescribed burning preparation, and vehicle maintenance. Volunteers contributed more than \$50,000 worth of labor to District programs during the past two years. Aimee Schmidt was honored as "Volunteer of the Year" for FY99 and Dick Dahlin was similarly honored for FY2000.



Aimee Schmidt, 1999 "Volunteer of the Year"



Dick Dahlin, 2000 "Volunteer of the Year"

Construction of Public Use Facilities

Thanks to the efforts of numerous volunteers during the past four years, visitors are now able to fully utilize the deck, gazebo, and boardwalk at the District Headquarters. The finishing touches to the facilities were completed in time for the Waterfowl Expo that was held on August 25th. The fully accessible 12' X 70' deck and 12' X 12' gazebo offer visitors a panoramic view of the Prairie Marsh and the 8' X 240' boardwalk provides access for a close-up view of the plants and wildlife that inhabit the marsh. These facilities have been incorporated into the recently developed Pine To Prairie Birding Trail, which runs from Fergus Falls in West Central Minnesota to Warroad in the northwestern part of the state.

More than 60 volunteers helped in the construction of the deck, gazebo, and boardwalk during the past four years. They contributed more than 3,280 hours of labor, which is valued at well over \$33,000. Volunteer workers came from varied backgrounds and had many reasons for working on the project. Work crews from the Becker County Sentencing To Service program came to work off sentences with community service, three Boy Scouts used portions of the construction project to earn Eagle Scout badges, AmeriCorps team members worked on the project to reduce their college education debts, and numerous individuals who enjoy wildlife just wanted to help at the District.



AmeriCorps Crew installing deck boards on the boardwalk.

Construction of the deck and boardwalk presented some definite, and sometimes humorous challenges. Most of the workers had little carpentry experience so building the deck with an attached gazebo on a side hill, and constructing the boardwalk into the marsh where the water was up to seven feet deep was quite challenging for most of the volunteers. Eagle Scouts Derek Mooney, Mike Hagen, and Tim Wiley were required to design their portions of the project, prepare materials lists, and coordinate their crews to get the work done in order to qualify for their Eagle Scout merit badges.



Eagle Scouts installing the railing on the accessibility ramp for the office deck and gazebo.

District Ranger Program

During the summer of 1996, the volunteer "District Ranger" program was instituted on the District. Since that time, the Rangers have been systematically checking the District's WPAs to document illegal activities, wildlife use, management needs, and habitat conditions. Their primary job is to be eyes and ears on the WPAs and they are instructed not to make any enforcement type contacts while in the field. They complete a "Ranger Report" for each WPA and replace damaged boundary signs that they encounter along their inspection routes. The Ranger Reports are used by District staff to identify management needs, and by enforcement personnel to pinpoint violations.

Multi-talented Volunteer Says "So Long" to District

On September 21, John McGovern semi-retired as a volunteer at the Detroit Lakes WMD. He began his career at the District on August 9, 1994 in the Senior Citizen Concentrated Employment Program and over the next seven years John contributed more than 10,000 hours of valuable service to various District programs. John primarily worked on maintenance projects in and around the shop, but his abilities also got him involved in numerous other activities such as the Waterfowl Expo, public use construction projects, hunter surveys, nesting structure construction and checking, hunting programs, prescribed burning preparation, seed harvesting and processing, grassland seeding, and youth hunter mentoring. He appointed himself as "Keeper of the tools" and his ability to find tools, parts, and equipment in the shop was legendary. He was always willing to impart his wisdom and District staff usually benefitted from his sage advice. John's experience, abilities, interests, cooperativeness, and work ethic made him a very valuable asset to the District.



John spent much of his time maintaining the District's equipment and facilities.

John's skills and abilities also got him involved in a variety of projects such as construction of the office deck with an AmeriCorps crew, and demonstrating shotgun patterning at the Waterfowl Expo.



Assisting AmeriCorps crew



Waterfowl Expo exhibition



Honored as FY98 Volunteer of the Year



The WMD staff said so-long to John at his "semi-retirement" party. LNP

9b. General administration

District Staff

Mark Chase	Wetland District Manager	GS-13	PFT
Jason Barker	Refuge Operations Specialist	GS-12	PFT
Larry Hanson	Refuge Operations Specialist	GS-07	PFT
Leslie Peterson	Wildlife Biologist	GS-12	PFT
John Gunderson	Wildlife Biologist	GS-11	PFT
Steve Schumacher	Prescribed Fire Specialist	GS-09	PFT
Darlene Christen	Administrative Technician	GS-07	PFT
Steve Maneval	Maintenance Worker	WG-08	PFT
Dave Davis	Tractor Operator	WG-06	PSEAS
Matt Sprenger	Biological Technician	GS-05	PSEAS
Paul Charland	Biological Technician	GS-05	PSEAS
Jimmy Laurent	Biological Science Aid	GS-04	STEP
Ryan Wermager	Biological Science Aid	GS-04	STEP
Dustin Jasken	Biological Science Aid	GS-04	STEP
Aimee Schmidt	Office Assistant	GS-01	STEP



Detroit Lakes WMD Staff

Back Row: Barker, Davis, Schumacher, Maneval, Peterson, Gunderson

Front Row: Christen, Hanson, Chase



STEP Summer Staff

Jasken, Laurent, Wermager

The District lost both permanent seasonal Biological Technicians this year. In June, Matt Sprenger transferred to Lacreek NWR in South Dakota as a Wildlife Biologist. Also in June, Paul Charland transferred to Neil Smith NWR in Iowa as a Biological Technician. Both Matt and Paul were outstanding employees for the District and we know it wouldn't be long until both landed PFT positions.

In July the Prescribed Fire Specialist position was filled by Steve Schumacher. Steve transferred from the J. Clark Salyer NWR in North Dakota.

STEP students Wermager and Jaskin were back with us once again over the summer months. Due to experience and education we were able to upgrade them from the GS-01 and GS-02 level up to the GS-04 level. STEP students Laurent and Schmidt were new hires this fiscal year.

Budget

A five year summary of office fund targets is depicted below in table 9.1.

Table 9.1 Detroit Lakes WMD office fund target summary (thousands).

Subactivity	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
1121	102.0	110.0	116.5	62.9	23.8
1231	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	0.0
1234	0.0	8.2	5.7	12.5	2.5
1261	455.1	497.8	464.9	581.0	552.9
1262	18.7	74.3	147.2	141.0	74.0
9251	30.7	40.9	43.9	44.0	42.8
Total	606.5	731.2	778.2	845.4	696.0