

REVIEW AND APPROVALS

MORRIS WETLAND MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Morris, Minnesota

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Fiscal Year 1997



[Signature]
Wetland Manager

6-4-98
Date

[Signature]
Complex Manager Review

6/9/98
Date

[Signature]
ARD, Refuges & Wildlife Approval

7/14/98
Date

FORWARD

This is the first year of using the new RCAR format for our Annual Narrative Report. The categories have changed some but we hope the historical data we record does not. This new format is fiscal year, so the 1997 narrative will overlap three months of the numbers from the 1996 narrative since the old format was calendar year.

One of the major concerns with the new format is that we not lose the historical perspective that the old format provided. The primary objective for the narrative should be a historical document for the field station to use. If narrative reports are made too brief just to save some time, some important historical data may be lost. There are many times that we use our old narrative reports for looking up information. It is our concern that we not lose any data in the new format.

From our perspective, it is easier and better timing to have the narrative on a calendar year. An example would be the fact that our field work for the "season" is still not completed by October 1, thus it is easier to report total numbers for the season at the calendar years end. If the new format remains fiscal year, will that mean that the due date of the Annual Narrative Report would be moved back and due closer to October 1? This would be bad timing as far as field work is concerned.

INTRODUCTION

The Morris Wetland Management District (WMD), originally established in 1964 as the Benson WMD, includes 244 Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA's) totalling 49,526 acres in fee title ownership. The Morris office also administers approximately 19,633 wetland acres of Waterfowl Management Easement lands, 1,224 acres of FmHA Easements and 1,182 acres of Wildlife Habitat Protection Easements. The fee and easement areas are scattered throughout Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Pope, Stevens, Swift, Traverse and Yellow Medicine Counties. The headquarters is located four miles east of Morris, Minnesota, on the 861 acre Long Lake-Edwards WPA.

The topography of west-central Minnesota is extremely diversified, ranging from the granite outcrops of the Minnesota River bottoms to the rolling hills of Pope County. The flat agricultural land of the Red River Valley of the north blends into the transition zone between the tall grass prairie and the eastern deciduous forest. Soils of the region are generally productive which contributed to the historically high concentrations of breeding waterfowl. With the advent of modern agriculture, over 60 percent of the original wetlands were drained and nearly 100 percent of the native grasslands were converted to cropland.

As a part of the Minnesota Waterfowl and Wetlands Management Complex (MWWMC), the primary objective of this District is to acquire, develop and manage habitat for waterfowl production and maintenance. Waterfowl species that commonly breed in this area include blue-winged teal, mallard, pintail, wood duck, redhead, canvasback, and Canada geese. The District also contains good populations of ring-necked pheasant, gray partridge and white-tailed deer. Another high priority objective is to provide habitat for native plants and animals, especially neotropical birds, and to provide for bio-diversity. Private land habitat improvement for waterfowl and other wildlife is an added emphasis during the 1990's. Waterfowl Production Areas are open to public hunting and a variety of other wildlife oriented uses. The WPA's receive their highest public use on opening days of waterfowl, pheasant, and deer hunting seasons.

Of the 49,526 acres of fee title, 16,762 acres consist of marshes. Grasslands comprise 30,571 acres of the District. This category includes 8,234 acres of reseeded native grasses and 6,934 acres of unbroken native prairie. The balance of the existing grassland contains various cover types including brome, quack and alfalfa. Croplands account for 768 acres and consist primarily of rest-rotation food plots for resident game. Less than four percent of the fee acreage is covered by timber. Of the 1,425 acres of timber, the majority consists of older farm groves and shelterbelts.

FORWARD

INTRODUCTION

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Winter snowfall amount was second most ever.
(Climatic Conditions)
- Spring floods were the result of snow melt and spring rains.
(Climatic Conditions)
- Krantz Lake was finally restored.
(Section 2a)
- Biological control of loosestrife and spurge continues.
(Section 3g)
- Nest structures continue to perform well - 59 percent use,
70 percent success. (Section 4d)



Flooding along Highway 28 near the town of Barry,
Big Stone County. 97-1 4/22/97 BLA

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Temperatures the first four months of 1997 were well below normal and precipitation (snow) was well above normal. May and June were extremely dry, July wet, with the remainder of the year about average in precipitation, but well above average temperatures.

In January we had four snowfall events exceeding three inches and eight other days with lesser amounts of snowfall for a total of 25.6 inches for the month. By the end of January the National Weather Service had issued six blizzard warnings for West-Central Minnesota.



Snow drifts like this one were common along the roadways. Wind and snow made travel stressful or impossible at times.

97-2 1/17/97 BLA

March was similar with four snowfall events exceeding three inches and seven other days with lesser amounts of snowfall for a total of 22.7 inches for the month. March came in like a lion with a foot of snowfall the first five days of the month.

Recorded snowfall October 1996 through April 1997 was 80.0 inches, the second most for this time period on record.

Cold conditions continued in April and May with average temperatures 3.9° below normal for both months. Record minimum daily temperatures were tied or set on April 8, 9, 10 and 11 of 8°, 9°, 12°, and 18° respectively.

Dry and cool conditions in April and May contrasted sharply with above normal precipitation and excellent growing conditions in July and August. Mean temperatures during July and August were about 1° below normal with July precipitation of 5.14 inches, 1.63 inches above normal, and August precipitation of 3.92 inches, 0.91 inches above normal.

A warm September and beautiful October highlighted an excellent row-crop year. In 11 out of the first 12 days of October the high temperature was 70° or warmer and the mean temperature for this period was 61.9°, the warmest on record.

For the year we had six days in which the maximum temperature reached or exceeded 90° and 40 days when the minimum temperature was 0° or below.

The warmest day of the year was June 24 with a temperature of 94° and the coldest was on January 26 with a temperature of -20°.

Total annual precipitation was 24.82 inches, 1.04 inches above normal.



This flooded gravel pit in Big Stone County shows what the near record snowfall and a quick spring melt did to many areas throughout the District. 97-3 4/22/97 BLA

RECORDS OR NEAR RECORDS SET IN 1997

<u>Period</u>	<u>Observation</u>	<u>Record</u>
January 4	Daily precip (0.93 in)	Record daily precip
January 5	Daily precip (0.54 in)	Record daily precip
January 24	Daily precip (0.40 in)	Record daily precip
January 5	Daily snowfall (9.0 in)	Record daily snowfall
January 24	Daily snowfall (4.6 in)	Record daily snowfall
Nov 96-Jan 97	Mean temperature (10.3°)	4th coldest for time period
Nov 96-Jan 97	Total snowfall (50.6 in)	2nd highest for time period
March 1	Daily precip (0.46 in)	Record daily precip
March 1	Daily snowfall (5.1 in)	Record daily snowfall
April 8	Minimum temp (8°)	Record daily minimum temp
April 9	Minimum temp (9°)	Tied record daily minimum temp
April 10	Minimum temp (12°)	Record daily minimum temp
April 11	Minimum temp (18°)	Record daily minimum temp
April 6	Daily precip (2.03 in)	Record daily precip
July 25	Daily precip (1.87 in)	Record daily precip
October 8	Maximum temp (86°)	Record daily maximum temp
October 1-12	Mean temperature (61.9°)	Record mean temp for time period
December	Mean temperature (24.9°)	5th warmest on record



This snow drift on Pepperton WPA was typical wherever trees were near the road. Any significant wind drifted these areas quickly, making it difficult to travel. 97-4 1/17/97 BLA

COMPARATIVE WEATHER DATA - 1997

Period	<u>Mean Temperature</u>			<u>Total Precip.</u>			<u>Snowfall</u>		
	1997	1996	Aver.	1997	1996	Aver.	1997	1996	Aver.
Jan.	3.4	1.2	8.0	2.25	1.19	.68	25.6	19.7	7.8
Feb.	14.2	12.3	12.8	.31	.39	.67	5.1	6.6	6.9
Mar.	22.2	20.2	26.7	2.19	.30	1.13	22.7	6.1	8.0
April	39.7	38.5	43.6	2.70	.83	2.26	1.6	5.0	3.4
May	52.2	53.6	56.1	1.56	3.28	2.97	0	0	0.2
June	70.2	68.0	65.8	2.51	2.37	3.96	0	0	0
July	69.8	68.6	70.9	5.14	3.33	3.51	0	0	0
August	67.3	68.8	68.7	3.92	1.88	3.01	0	0	0
Sept.	63.3	59.4	59.0	1.30	2.45	2.20	0	0	0.1
Oct.	48.6	46.8	47.2	2.20	5.40	1.74	.0	0	0.7
Nov.	25.5	19.8	29.7	.53	2.34	.97	6.3	14.5	4.7
Dec.	24.9	7.8	15.2	.21	.73	.68	4.1	10.5	6.6
Annual	41.8	38.8	42.0	24.82	24.49	23.78	65.4	62.4	38.4



These turkey barns, constructed in 1996, were all standing in water when the snow melted. 97-5 4/3/97 BLA

SELECTED WEATHER VARIABLES

<u>Weather</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>Normal</u>
Growing season precip. (April 1 - August 31)	15.83 in.	11.69 in.	15.71 in.
Maximum temperature	94° (June 24)	96° (June 27)	
Minimum temperature	-20° (January 26)	-34° (February 1,2)	
Days with temp. >90°F	6 days	6 days	13 days
Days with temp. <0°F	40 days	66 days	47 days
Last spring frost	31° (May 15)	29° (May 13)	32° (May 11)
First fall frost	27° (Oct. 20)	26° (Oct. 3)	28° (Oct. 4)
Corn growing degree days* (May - September)	2385	2254	2300

* Growing degree days is calculated by using daily minimum and maximum temperatures in a formula. Each day's calculated number is added together for the entire season to get the numbers shown.

MONITORING AND STUDIES

1a. Surveys and Censuses

The non-game bird point count ran from June 9, to July 1, 1997, and included 41 native prairie and 17 seeded native sites on six WPA's. A total of 60 species were found of which 22 were neotropical migrants. Most numerous were members of the blackbird family. Green-winged teal, olive-sided flycatcher, and yellow-billed cuckoo were new to the five year study. Bird numbers were down from previous years.

The rail and bittern survey began June 9 and ended June 20, 1997. No rails or bittern were found. The survey was run at sites on WPA's used for the non-game bird point count.

The woodcock survey was done May 15, 1997, with five counted.

Spurge bug release monitoring at Aphthona (flea beetle) release sites on Loen WPA were collected with a 15 inch sweep net along five points in the north, south, east, and west direction from the original release point. Flea beetles were counted after each of the sweeps and recorded. The flea beetles had been released at four locations in 80 acres of native prairie in July of 1996 to aid in the control of leafy spurge problems.

**Table 1 - Number and Distance For Adult Flea Beetles on
Loen Waterfowl Production Area Biological Control
Sites - 1997**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Site</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Greatest Distance (feet)</u>
6/30/97	A	125	15
7/15/97	A	143	20
6/30/97	B	4	15
7/15/97	B	8	15
6/30/97	C	13	5
7/15/97	C	11	20
6/30/97	D	0	0
7/15/97	D	3	5

At site "A" most flea beetles were found at five feet from the original release point.

Morris WMD NR97 - "Four Square Mile Waterfowl Pair Count"

Wetland and upland conditions were good to excellent for waterfowl throughout the District. Canada goose numbers continue to increase. Breeding pair estimates are provided by Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center using results of our Four-Square Mile Survey. Results from 46 plots follows.

**FOUR SQUARE MILE SURVEY BREEDING PAIR ESTIMATES
MORRIS WMD - 1997**

	<u>Mallards</u>	<u>Blue-Winged Teal</u>	<u>Woodduck</u>	<u>All Species</u>
Breeding Pairs	28,800	22,300	5,100	68,000
Pairs/Sq. Mile	6.2	4.8	1.1	14.5
Pairs/Pond	1.1	0.9	0.2	2.7
Total Recruits	30,600	37,900		76,300
Recruits/Sq. Mile	6.5	8.1		16.2
Recruitment Rate	0.53			0.68

Breeding pair estimates and recruitment rates were down from the previous year; however, the decrease in recruitment rates was relatively small.

Morris WMD NR97 - "Predator/Furbearer Scent Post Survey"

The 22nd Annual Interagency Cooperative Scent Station Survey was conducted during autumn, 1997. In addition to Minnesota DNR wildlife staff, cooperators were Agassiz, Tamarac, Sherburne, and Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuges, all U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wetland Management Districts, Fond du Lac, Red Lake, and Leech Lake Indian Reservations, 1854 Authority, Fond du Lac Ceded Lands, Central Lakes and Vermillion Community Colleges, Cass and Beltrami County Land Departments, Twin Cities Arsenal, and (new in 1997) Marshall County Central School at Newfolden.

The routes show the distribution and annual visitation indices for furbearers, dogs, and cats in the state. Routes are generally run in a three week interval between late August and early October. Scent stations spaced 0.43 km apart along a route are baited with a biodegradable plaster-of-paris patty acid scent (Fas) disc and left overnight. Each scent station is checked and all tracks identified and documented. Data is used primarily to develop a population index.

The Morris Wetland Management District participation commenced on September 2 and was completed September 10, 1997. Fifteen routes of ten scent stations located in four counties were run: Stevens County-7 routes, Pope County-4 routes, and 2 routes each in Big Stone and Swift Counties. Survey results from Morris are shown in Table 2.

Three routes had to be reset due to destruction by rain.

Table 2 - Comparison of Scent Station Survey Data
Morris Wetland Management District
1991-1997

<u>Species</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1991</u>
Coyote	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
Red Fox	12	11	20	38	24	37	19
Raccoon	33	30	25	36	40	28	14
Skunk	11	11	14	6	8	4	17
Dog	8	13	12	11	8	8	10
Cat	16	18	10	4	8	6	18
Mink	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Badger	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Weasel	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Opossum	1	0	0	0	0	0	0



1997 is the first year an opossum has appeared in the Morris WMD survey stations. Other species observed but not listed in the above table include white tail deer, birds, and small mammals such as mice.

97-6

1b. Studies and Investigations

The University of Minnesota-Morris, Division of Science and Mathematics, aided the Service by collecting the following results for part of 35 National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District effort to document abnormality rates of frogs and toads on Service managed lands.

<u>Date</u>	<u>WPA</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Abnormal</u>	<u>Percent Abnormal</u>
7/18	Edwards	Rana sylvatica-wf	5	0	0
7/18	Edwards	Rana pipiens-nlf	3	0	0
8/05	Edwards	Rana pipiens-nlf	22	1	8.3
7/15	Wente	Bufo hemiophrys-dt	225	3	1.3
7/15	Wente	Rana pipiens-nlf	208	7	3.4
7/21	Wente	Rana pipiens-nlf	108	0	0

wf = wood frog

nlf = northern leopard frog

dt = Dakota toad

1c. General Wildlife Observations

Birds

Bald eagle nesting attempts within the District continues to be seven. However, it is not known how many were successful.

A male trumpeter swan with wing tag number 242 was reported seen three miles north of Morris on October 14, 1996.

Minnesota State Species of Concern that were noted are as follows:

- Short-Eared Owl on October 10, 1996, 1/8 mile southwest of Muddy Creek WPA, Stevens County.
- Sandhill Cranes - 30 on October 30, 1996, and four on September 22, 1997, both sightings near Cyrus, Minnesota.
- Marbled Godwit - single sightings on October 7 - one at Anderson WPA and one two miles east of Correll. None were found during the point counts.
- American White Pelican - The first spring sighting was on April 10 at Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge.
- American Bittern - reported observations were: one five miles northwest of Appleton, Swift County on May 4, one between Danvers and Benson, Swift County on May 5, and one at Robinhood WPA, Traverse County, on May 6.

The first observations of waterfowl (early spring migrants) were on March 23, which is about one week later than past years. Usual numbers made their appearances in the District the first week of April. Local resident geese populations of breeders continue experiencing high productivity from excellent wetland conditions combined with good nesting cover even with the late spring. A very late observation of a snow goose at Schultz WPA on June 5 is uncommon.

Game Mammals

There are no firearms white-tailed deer harvest numbers for this narrative because the new format is fiscal year, so the 1997 deer season will be recorded on next year's narrative.

Most every year moose are reported in the District, but this year no reportings were recorded.

Coyote sightings are becoming more common throughout the District. Sightings from landowners and staff have been reported in all counties of the District.

According to Scent Post Survey results by the Minnesota DNR (Section 1a), red fox numbers increased approximately 15 percent over last year in our zone. This is still approximately a 36 percent drop from the high index in 1990. The coyote index increased drastically over last year, approximately 117 percent in the Farm Zone. This was tied for the second highest recording ever. The coyote index increases in the Transition and Farm Zone routes reflect continued range expansion. Skunks show a slight decrease in our zone from last year, but numbers were close to the ten year average. Lac qui Parle County recorded the highest visits of skunk to the stations in the state. Raccoon index increased approximately 24 percent in our zone. This was the second highest ever, less than 1 percent lower than the highest recording. Some other interesting numbers: deer tracks occurred on only 56 percent of all routes, the lowest on record, and Stevens County had the high domestic cat index.

Minnesota DNR August Roadside Counts show the 1997 Eastern cottontail index decreased 36 percent statewide from 1996; this is the third lowest on record. The West Central Region showed a 15 percent decrease over 1996. The statewide white-tailed jackrabbit index for 1997 decreased 28 percent over 1996. This, along with three other years, is the second lowest number ever recorded.

Other Resident Wildlife

According to the 1997 Minnesota DNR August Roadside Wildlife Count Summary, the following was recorded:

Ring-Necked Pheasants

The statewide pheasant index for 1997 showed a 17 percent decline from 1996 and showed a 20 percent decline from the five-year mean. The number of hens and broods per 100 miles showed decreases of 20 percent and 12 percent respectively and the number of cocks per 100 miles increased 12 percent. The West Central Region, which includes our entire District, showed a decrease of 64 percent over last year and 60 percent below the five-year mean. This is the lowest number recorded, with 1993 being the next lowest. Statewide, 1997 was the fourth worst recording, with 1993, 1986 and 1984 having lower numbers recorded.

Gray Partridge

Statewide roadside count indices show a 72 percent increase from last year and 7.6 percent above the five-year mean. The West Central Region showed a 78 percent decrease over last year, making this the lowest recording ever, with 1993-1997 the five lowest numbers on record.

Wild Turkey

See Section 4c.

Fisheries

In 1997, as in the past twelve years, the Minnesota DNR Area Fisheries Office in Glenwood requested the use of four type V wetlands on waterfowl production areas for rearing walleye fry to fingerlings. However, none of the ponds were used this summer.

Hunting

The diversity of WPA's in the Morris District offers different options to the hunter.

Waterfowl hunting was good over the District. The season was increased to 60 days and a daily bag limit of six birds was also allowed. The open season date for ducks, coots, and mergansers was October 4 - December 2. The early Canada goose season was open from September 6-15. The daily bag limit was increased to five Canada geese in our area. This early goose season targets the local population of giant Canada geese. The area included in this early season and the bag limits are set due in part to the depredation complaints which are received. The entire state, except for the Northwest Zone and the Lac qui Parle Zone, is included in this hunt. The regular Canada goose season for the west zone was October 4 - November 12 which had a daily bag limit of one.

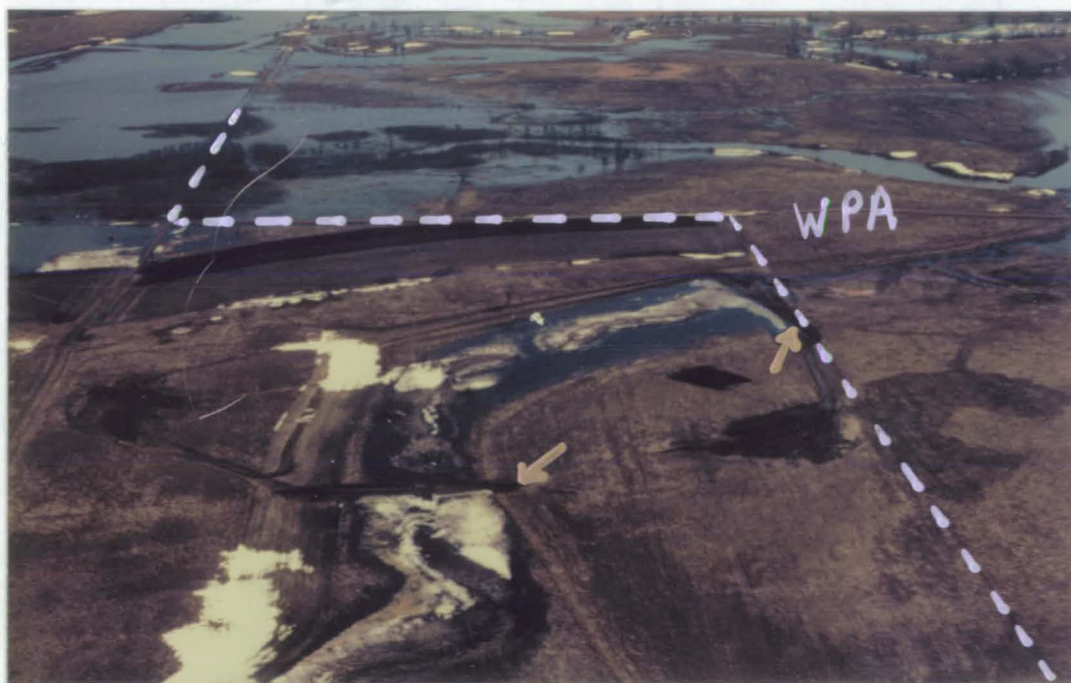
Trapping

For the fourth year red fox and raccoon were open to trapping and hunting year around. According to a local fur buyer, raccoon and beaver prices are up, fox prices are steady, muskrat down slightly, coyote down and mink are way down. Trapping data for specific species is not available. The Minnesota Predator/Furbearer Scent Post Survey (Section 1a) shows red fox and raccoon have increased from last year, and generally furbearers within our District remain at high levels.

HABITAT RESTORATION

2a. Wetland Restoration (On/Off Refuge)

Diamond Lake was one of the larger restoration projects we worked on in 1997. Diamond Lake is a 100 acre wetland drained through a county ditch system. Initial surveys were completed on the lake in 1994 to determine feasibility. A topographic survey and structure design were completed in 1995 and 1996, at which time all six landowners expressed an interest in seeing the lake restored. Contacts with the landowners in 1997 to discuss specific aspects of the restoration found one landowner hesitant because of water levels. The water level was dropped one foot from 4.5 feet to 3.5 feet in an attempt to satisfy him. At the same time an absentee landowner initiated an anti-government campaign against the Fish and Wildlife Service claiming the government could not be trusted. Because these two landowners would not agree to the restoration project, a letter was sent to all six landowners informing them of our intentions of not pursuing the project any further. We have since received a call from the absentee landowner and a very lengthy discussion with her indicated she may be willing to change her position next year.



Bruce Bonde restoration in Lac qui Parle County adjacent to Goodman WPA during the spring flood. 97-7 4/3/97 BLA

A total of eleven landowners cooperated with our private lands program to restore 20 wetlands during FY 1997. Wetland restorations were completed in six of the eight counties in the District for a total of 345 wetland acres restored. The typical restoration averaged 4.17 acres per restoration in FY 1997 at an average cost of \$330.68 per acre. Approximately 33 percent of the restoration costs were paid for by private donors. Of the twenty restorations completed, two were non-typical in that they consisted of 220 acres and 75 acres respectively.

The 220 acre restoration/enhancement project involved raising the dike and water level on Krantz Lake, a shallow waterfowl lake under public and private ownership. Attempts were made to drain the lake for agricultural purposes through a county ditch system in the early 1900's. The lake was partially restored in 1988 through a cooperative effort between the Sauk River Watershed District, Minnesota DNR, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The dike, the majority of which is on private property, was constructed in conjunction with a ditch cleanout project restoring approximately one and one half feet of water to the lake. This water depth was not sufficient to open up the dense cattail stand in the lake, to the dissatisfaction of the private landowners, the DNR, and Fish and Wildlife Service. Area farmers were also dissatisfied with the ditch cleanout project because they did not get the drainage they had anticipated.

Through negotiations, a ditch cleanout project was approved in 1996 in which the original dike and spillway would be raised adding an additional two feet of water to the lake. To complete the project an access road was needed to the Krantz Lake dike. This led to the restoration of a 32 acre wetland on the Krantz Lake Waterfowl Production Area as the access road was incorporated into a dike for the wetland as well. Project costs to restore the two wetlands were shared between the Sauk River Watershed District and the Morris Wetland Management District.

In addition to the eleven landowners involved in the wetland restoration program, thirteen were involved in repair projects. The above normal precipitation the last few years has increased the number of projects needing repairs. A total of fourteen restorations required repairs, eight water control structures and six dikes. A total of \$9,718 was spent on repairs involving 127 wetland acres. The average repair cost was \$694.14 per project or \$76.52 per wetland acre.



Washout on the John Scharf restoration following the spring flood. 97-8 4/97 BLA

Wetland restorations on public lands totaled 31 wetlands restored for 64 acres. All of the restorations were done on WPA's except for six which were completed on a state wildlife management area. The typical restoration averaged 2.06 acres per restoration in FY 1997 at an average cost of \$298.23 per acre. Approximately 69 percent of the restoration costs were paid for by private donors.



This is one of six restorations completed on the Reserve Wildlife Management Area in cooperation with the Minnesota DNR. 97-9 4/97 BLA

Wetland restoration repairs on public lands were required on the spillway of one nine acre wetland on Artichoke WPA during FY 1997. The repair cost \$526 to complete. The per acre repair cost was \$58.44.

2b. Upland Restoration (On/Off Refuge)

Grasslands consist of native prairie, native grass and introduced cool-season grass seedings, and legume plantings. Management practices include fire, grazing, and haying. Some fields have not had any active management for 20 years but still provide good cover. New fee acquisition has provided the acreage for seeding each year. Occasionally new acquisition land is cash rented back to the original landowner. The purpose is to have soybeans planted, making a good seed bed for native grasses.

Weed control on young seedings is very critical. A combination of herbicides (roundup, 2,4-D, banvel), burning, haying, and grazing are used to aid the establishment and maintenance of both native and cool-season grass seedings and legume plantings. For native grass establishment and maintenance, prescribed burning reduces competition from unwanted cool-season grasses but may also stimulate broadleaf weeds. This may necessitate the subsequent application of 2,4-D.

TREATMENT OF SEEDINGS - MORRIS WMD - 1997 (in Acres)

<u>County</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>2,4-D</u>	<u>2,4-D & Banvel</u>	<u>2,4-D & Roundup</u>	<u>Mowing</u>
Big Stone	341.4	57.0	149.0	120.0	15.4
Chippewa	45.1			45.1	
Lac qui Parle	4.0			4.0	
Pope	177.6	101.2	47.0		29.4
Stevens	379.0	261.0	76.0		42.0
Swift	186.1	158.1	28.0		
Traverse	458.0	180.0	143.0	61.0	
Yellow Medicine	0.0				
Total	1,591.2	757.3	443.0	230.1	86.8

Clinton Ag Service was hired to spray 1/2 pound 2,4-D and 1/2 pound Banvel per acre on five areas totalling 248 acres. The total cost for application was \$1,116.00. The vendor furnished the equipment and the government provided the chemical.

Native Seedings

Only one upland easement, the Koosman tract in Swift County, was seeded to native grasses this year. This tract will add approximately 100 acres of upland nesting cover to the Lubenow WPA.



The Koosman Habitat Easement added valuable nesting cover to the Lubenow WPA. 97-10 9/9/96 BLA

Since 1973 the Morris Wetland Management District has planted 8,231 acres of native grasses. A shift has been made to plant more local ecotypes and indigenous species.

The Morris WMD harvested native grass seed from the following areas:

HARVESTED NATIVE GRASS SEED - MORRIS WMD - 1997

<u>WPA</u>	<u>Species/ Variety</u>	<u>Lbs. Cleaned Seed</u>	<u>Germ.</u>	<u>Purity</u>	<u>Harvest Date</u>
Edwards	Little Blue/Native	150	69%	68%	9/24
Edwards	Big Blue-Indian/ Native	1300	70% 45%	52% (BB) 27% (Ind)	9/23
Freeman	Big Blue-Side Oats/ Native	200	71% 76%	46% (BB) 32% (SO)	9/18
Lamprecht	Switch/Forestburg	680	70%	99%	9/26
Schultz	Indian/ Tomahawk	875	71%	46%	9/17
*Big Stone	NWR Big Blue/Native	2200	77%	51%	Sept

*The Big Bluestem from Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge was given to Morris WMD.

WARM-SEASON NATIVE GRASS SEEDING - MORRIS WMD - 1997

<u>County</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Date</u>
Big Stone	Odden	125	6/23-25
Chippewa	Lundgren (+wildflowers)	49	6/13
Lac qui Parle	Plover	5	6/12
Traverse	Mosquito Ranch	<u>32</u>	6/30,7/7
Total		211	

Cool-Season Grasslands

No cool-season grass seedings were done in 1997.

Native Prairie

The original upland vegetation within the Morris District was tall grass prairie. The total native prairie acreage on WPA's within the District was 6,934 in 1997. The areas vary in size from less than one acre to 424 acres. Active management consisting of prescribed burning, grazing, and haying have been limited to the larger acreages. The small remnants have not been actively managed because of size, location, and staff time.



Native prairie on Rothi WPA, Big Stone County.
97-11 9/17/97 BLA

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

HABITAT SUMMARY - MORRIS WMD - 1997

<u>Cover Type</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Grassland	30,571
Wetland	16,762
Cropland	768
Timber	<u>1,425</u>
Total	49,526

3a. Water Level Management

The Morris Wetland Management District continues to manage 29 water control structures on 943 acres on Waterfowl Production Areas within a surrounding four county area. Two water control structures under easement on private land are also maintained and managed.

Analysis of water management at our water control structures is done by monthly observations and aerial photography. Aerial photos are taken of each pool in late August or early September which greatly assist in the evaluation of management decisions for each pool.

The primary management of all wetlands is for waterfowl production. Management of each wetland is determined by its association with the surrounding wetland complex. Management goals include: spring food production and habitat for breeding pairs, brood rearing, and fall migration.

For the past two years we have started complete draw downs on five different wetlands. We have also lowered the water levels on many other ponds in an attempt to stimulate growth of emergent vegetation. Four more ponds are planned for complete draw down next year.

There are also six beaver exclusion devices in place at water control structures. These structures are working great and have saved many hours of beaver dam removal. This year one of the structures was replaced due to settling.

High water levels over the past few years have caused some damage to different structures. Miscellaneous repairs were done at five of the structures. The structure at Olson WPA is being completely replaced.

3b. Haying

Haying has been used on a limited basis for noxious weed control and upland habitat management. It has been utilized

primarily on pure stands of alfalfa. The annual manipulation keeps the alfalfa in a more vigorous condition. Haying is normally delayed until after July 15 to allow for duck nests to hatch. However, on newer seedings haying may take place earlier to eliminate a serious noxious weed problem.

HAYING SUMMARY - MORRIS WMD - 1997

<u>County</u>	<u>WPA</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Rate/Acre</u>	<u>Harvest Date</u>
Big Stone	Anderson	18	\$15.00	6/30
	Boehnke	35	\$10.00	6/30
	*Hillman	37	\$12.00	6/30
		18	\$ 5.00	9/30
	Lane	57	\$ 2.00	6/20
Lac qui Parle	Bolson Slough	40	\$ 1.00	7/15
Pope	*Rolling Forks	49	\$10.00	8/08
		50	\$ 8.00	
	Walden	14	\$12.00	9/22
	Westport	70	\$12.00	6/30
Stevens	*Thorstad	32	\$15.00	7/10
		32	\$ 8.50	9/11
Swift	Fahl	57	\$12.00	8/28
	Monson Lake	38	\$12.00	7/21
Traverse	Diekmann	86	\$27.55	7/05
	Gibson	28	\$ 5.00	6/30
	Mosquito Ranch	64	\$ 5.00	7/15
	Robinhood	102	\$41.55	7/05
Yellow Med.	Spellman Lake	108	\$ 8.00	7/15
	Smith FmHA Esmt	11	\$10.00	9/15
	Monson FmHA Esmt	25	\$ 7.00	8/10
Total		971		

*Fields were hayed twice

3c. Grazing

Controlled grazing has been used as an alternative to prescribed burning. Objectives are to reduce litter buildup and reduce competition from cool-season grass invaders. A high concentration of livestock is needed to remove a dense litter buildup and the new growth in a 30 day period of time. Grazing does not begin until mid-April for two reasons:

1. Most permittees are not through calving until May 1.
2. The combination of spring rains and high A.U.M.'s can cause degradation of the sod.

The grazing period is 30 days. In dry years there may not be enough vegetation to support the number of A.U.M.'s and live-stock need to be taken off early. Permittees have been good to work with. This grazing period on WPA's gives their own pastures a break. However, it is becoming more difficult to find permittees as each year there are fewer cow/calf operators. Grazing is targeted more to native prairie. Areas are normally grazed two years in a row and then rested for three to five years. Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) comes on very strong if grazing takes place only one year.

GRAZING SUMMARY - MORRIS WMD - 1997

<u>County/WPA</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Actual AUM's</u>	<u>Planned AUM's</u>	<u>Fee/ AUM</u>	<u>Grazing Period</u>	<u>Scheduled Period</u>
Big Stone						
Thompson	64	73	93	\$3.00	5/05-6/04	4/20-5/25
Helgeson	5	5	5	\$3.00	5/01-6/01	4/20-5/25
Stevens						
Struck	50	26	30	\$3.25	4/19-5/24	4/19-5/24
Wente	<u>100</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>34</u>	\$3.25	4/19-5/24	4/19-5/24
Total	219	142	162			

3d. Farming

In 1997, 345 acres were planted and managed as resident wildlife food plots. These plots were located on waterfowl production areas identified by the Minnesota DNR as significant wintering areas for ring-necked pheasant and white-tailed deer. Total available food plot acres was 768. In 1997 some plots were too wet to plant.

All food plots were located near shelterbelts and/or cattail sloughs which provide escape and winter cover. Plots were located on soils not classified as highly erodible land which have minimal soil loss potential. Most of the food plots consisted of two, ten-acre fields where corn was planted in one field and a grass mixture was seeded in the other. These fields are then alternated every three to five years. This rotation has helped reduce disease and insect problems in corn and also provided nesting cover in the grassland field. Occasionally soybeans are planted one year instead of corn to break an insect or disease cycle. The cooperator is responsible for all field work, seed, fertilizer, and weed control. The wildlife's (government's) share is left standing in the field in alternate strips. The alternate strips help disperse snow and reduce the chances of the entire plot being buried in snow. The cooperator is allowed to harvest any corn or soybeans remaining the following spring.

FARMING SUMMARY - MORRIS WMD - 1997

<u>County</u>	<u>No. WPA's With Plots</u>	<u>Total Acres in Corn, Soybeans</u>	<u>Total Acres In Plots</u>
Big Stone	13	90	273
Lac qui Parle	1	0	19
Pope	4	48	89
Stevens	13	96.5	187.5
Swift	6	68	114
Traverse	4	74	94
Yellow Medicine	<u>1</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>12</u>
Total	42	388.5	788.5

Note: Due to wet field conditions, several WPA's were not planted as planned.

The Stevens County Pheasants Forever chapter financed winter food plots and feeder cribs throughout the county, predominantly on private land. One plot was planted on Edwards WPA and one on Pomme de Terre River WPA, both in Stevens County.

3f. Fire Management

A total of 1,705 acres were prescribe burned in 1997. Experienced employees aided in making the burning program more efficient.



Prescribed burn on Rothi WPA, Big Stone County. Not too often you can use snow drifts as fire breaks. 97-12 5/6/97 BLA

PRESCRIBED BURN SUMMARY - MORRIS WMD - 1997
(In Acres)

County/ WPA	Date Burned	Native Prairie	Intro. Natives	DNC	Marsh	Trees	Total	Cost/ Acre	Total Man Hours
Big Stone									
Odden	5/01	18	55	59	3		135	\$2.17	20.0
Rothi	5/06	182	108	123			413	\$1.46	30.0
Pope									
Rolling Fks	4/24	44	53	64			161	\$2.40	22.0
Stewart	4/25	43	56	75			174	\$1.97	19.5
Stevens									
WCES	5/01		1				1	\$30.00	1.0
Edwards	5/09	16	35	14	1		66	\$3.64	13.0
Fehr	5/15	5	33	23			61	\$1.80	6.45
Golden	5/15	7	70	51			128	\$2.68	18.0
Private	5/15			32					
SWELL	5/16		1				1	\$38.00	2.0
Edwards	5/27		1				1	\$37.00	2.0
Traverse									
Robinhood	5/06	<u>88</u>	<u>262</u>	<u>182</u>	<u>—</u>		<u>532</u>	\$0.90	24.0
Total		403	675	623	4		1,673		
Private							<u>+32</u>		
Grand Total							1,705		
Average Cost/Acre			\$1.74						
Average Man Hours/Burn			14.36						

3g. Pest Plant Control

Spraying and Mowing

Of the 43 WPA's treated for noxious weed control, 32 were treated for thistle, five for spurge, and six for both spurge and thistle. If the District could afford a more aggressive noxious weed control program we would receive less complaints from neighbors and local government officials.

NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL - MORRIS WMD - 1997

County	Contract <u>Spraying</u>		Force Account <u>Spraying</u>		Account <u>Mowing</u>		<u>Totals</u>	
	No. <u>WPAs</u>	<u>Acres</u>	No. <u>WPAs</u>	<u>Acres</u>	No. <u>WPAs</u>	<u>Acres</u>	*No. <u>WPAs</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Big Stone	0	0	7	116	2	18	9	134
Chippewa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lac qui Parle	0	0	2	13	0	0	2	13
Pope	0	0	1	4	0	0	1	4
Stevens	1	18	14	169	7	83	22	270
Swift	0	0	2	12	0	0	2	12
Traverse	0	0	4	42	0	0	4	42
Yellow Med.	0	0	2	36	1	27	3	63
1997 Total	1	18	32	392	10	128	43	538
1996 Total	0	0	29	230	12	173	41	403
1995 Total	0	0	25	140	6	77	31	217
1994 Total	0	0	38	386.5	12	133.7	50	520
1993 Total	0	0	23	111	10	143	33	254

*Some waterfowl production areas may have received both contract and force account control efforts.

Biological ControlPurple Loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria)

May 5, 1997, 20 loosestrife plants were dug and potted.

June 4, 1997, 100 adult Black-margined loosestrife beetle (*Galerucella californiensis*) and/or Golden loosestrife beetle (*G. pusilla*) starter bugs were received from Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. Ten bugs were placed in each of the ten pots where they would remain until adult stage was reached. Each pot had the potential to produce 1,000 to 1,500 beetles.

July 17, 1997, two pots with larvae beetles were placed at two locations (Site G and H) at Kolstad Lake WPA, since insects had eaten all the leaves from the potted plants and had nothing left to eat. The larvae could eat freely at the release sites and pupae into surrounding soil before emerging as adults. A check of the release sites in August found lots of adults devouring loosestrife.

July 21, 1997, adults in the remaining eight pots began to emerge.

July 22, 1997, release of beetles at infestation sites:

- 2 pots - 100 larvae, 25 adults-Nelson Lake WPA, Site A
- 1 pot - 500 larvae, 50 adults-Nelson Lake WPA, Site B
- 1 pot - 500 larvae, 100 adults-Nelson Lake WPA, Site C
- 2 pots - 550 larvae, 100 adults-Nelson Lake WPA, Site D
- 1 pot - 600 larvae, 100 adults-Overby WPA, Site E
- 3 pots - 1450 larvae, 50 adults-Ouren WPA, Site F



Donna Oglesby monitoring progress of raising loosestrife beetles. 97-13 7/22/97 BLA

Leafy Spurge

Flea beetles (*Aphthona lacetosa*, *A. czwalinae*, *A. flaua*) were released on Loen WPA, Swift County, in 1996. Three sweep net samplings were scheduled this year (see results in Section 1a. Surveys and Censuses).

July 1, 1997, USDA Agent Pam Deerwood released 3,000 to 4,000 flea beetles on Loen WPA, Site A (1,500 adults were previously released here on July 5, 1996), and to two new locations, Sites H and I.

July 8, 1997, Biological Technician Oglesby scouted and marked several sites for possible release of flea beetles on Lynch Lake WPA, Swift County. On July 10, Pam Deerwood again provided flea beetles which were released by Oglesby - 15,000 adults at Site E, 25,000 adults at Site F, and 30,000 adults at Site G.

To date beetles have been released on two WPA's in our District. Hopefully they will be successful and serve as a source of insects to be used throughout the District in the next few years.

3h. WPA/Easement Monitoring

Easements

EASEMENT ENFORCEMENT SUMMARY - MORRIS WMD - FY 97

Cases closed during FY 97	1
Cases forwarded for legal action	0
New fall 97 violations (unresolved)	0
Total cases outstanding September 30, 1997	10

The FY 97 easement surveillance flights were completed November 14 and April 30. After one day of flying on November 14 the record setting winter of 1996-97 began. During easement flights we also photograph other potential wetland violations and report them to appropriate FSA, Minnesota DNR, and/or Corps of Engineers authorities.



High water backed over Highway 28 and threatened buildings, so a lower elevation was permitted. 97-14 4/22/97 BLA

Several consecutive wet years and the record setting floods the spring of 1997 prompted exceptionally high drainage and drainage maintenance activity in the District. Much time was spent inspecting high water situations and negotiating reasonable permitted solutions or denying the request. Usually temporary drawdown by pumping or a temporary ditch was permitted, but some permanent overflow devices were allowed in closed watersheds. Most work is legal, much is questionable but unenforceable, and some is obviously in violation. These we target and sometimes get restoration. However, the reduced payments by USDA coupled with reduced FWS involvement in swampbuster has taken a lot of teeth out of landowner concerns.

FmHA and grassland easements are new to our list of responsibilities. With the smaller acreage and increased authority/responsibility to regulate activities on these lands, we will likely see some precedent setting cases and situations evolve that will be interesting. Procedures for administering these lands are evolving and will hopefully be less of a problem than anticipated.

Waterfowl Production Areas

Most WPA problems are detected during routine work activities, while flying easement checks, or from public turn-in. Typical problems include farming encroachment, rock dumping, sign damage, vehicle trespass, dead animal and/or garbage dumping, and private drainage affecting WPA wetlands.



This garbage was dumped on Ben Wade WPA. We do not encounter garbage dumping very often, but when we do any identifying marks are usually removed. This person was nice enough to leave his name and big game tag for identification.

97-15 7/18/97 CGR

Generally problems are caused by neighboring landowners or renters. The preferred procedure is to negotiate a solution without creating a neighboring enemy. Legal action is usually a last resort. Other violations such as vehicle trespass, dumping, littering, etc., leave highly visible evidence, but catching someone is difficult and rare.

Reports from test wells and a weir on Dakota WPA, Yellow Medicine County, are received and forwarded to Minnesota DNR. Since monitoring started in 1995 there has been no cause for alarm. However these have been exceptionally wet years and monitoring continues.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

4b. Disease Monitoring and Treatment

There was no outbreak of Avian Botulism, Type C, on Mud Lake in Traverse County along the Minnesota/South Dakota border. This is three years in a row with no outbreak.

Last year birds died on Cyrus Lake, Pope County, from Avian Botulism, Type C, but nothing was reported in 1997.

On March 26 an injured Canada goose was taken to an area rehabilitator. A juvenile red-tailed hawk with a broken wing and leg was taken to an area rehabilitator on July 14, but had to be destroyed.

4c. Re-Introductions and Other Resident Wildlife

Because of deep snow and bad weather, no wild turkeys were released in our District this year. Since 1994 approximately 100 birds have been released in four different areas in Pope County. There are plans to release more birds in 1998. Turkeys have been released in the following areas: near the Kensington area, Rolling Forks Township, Terrace, the "Hogs Back" area one mile north of Starbuck, Mud lake (near Lake Reno), and near Lake Johanna. The birds released in 1994 have grown in numbers. In the spring of 1998 there will be a turkey hunt for part of Pope County.

4d. Nest Structures

Morris WMD has been developing and field testing waterfowl nest structures since 1991. As the lead District for the Minnesota Waterfowl and Wetland Management Complex responsible for nest structure testing, we have sought to develop productive duck nesting structures for use by interested citizens, wildlife clubs, and wildlife managers. Several designs have been tested with varying degrees of success. We have promoted use of those that have been most successful.

Our most productive has been a floating cedar raft type with several available nest sites for ducks and a goose (optional). This type was distributed throughout Minnesota through the efforts of Service Volunteer Roger Strand who coordinated the program with the support of Ducks Unlimited and to date has contributed \$54,000 to the program. Their contributions were matched by private individuals, sportsman clubs, and conservation agencies to accomplish a total project distribution of 1,160 floating nest structures state wide. Most were placed in the prairie pothole region of west-central Minnesota. After five years of maintenance and reporting, the structure becomes the property of the cooperator.

In the fourth year of volunteering his time, Roger Strand reported that preliminary feedback about the 724 structures he is monitoring again looks excellent for those who accomplish good maintenance. However, a notable drop in good maintenance has been noted. Generally, those participants doing a good maintenance are experiencing continued exceptionally high use averaging well over one nest initiated per available structure. His final report will be interesting.

In 1996, 542 available structures reported 581 nesting attempts and hatched 399 duck nests and 42 goose nests. The 1997 results should be quite similar. Not bad for a program occurring primarily on private lands.

This is largely a project of volunteer citizens and sportsman clubs with little or no budget. The floating structures are very productive and practical in larger wetlands. However, they require a significant labor/time commitment in exchange for their high productivity.

Project Coordinator Roger Strand (retired) continues to display the enthusiasm and commitment of a professional biologist. He will gather reports and summarize data through 1997. We will share this information as it comes available.

Morris WMD staff and volunteers monitored four nesting structure projects in 1997. Project 1-3 results are shown on Table 3 and Project 4 results are on Table 4.



The "Argo" - a new all-terrain vehicle on tracks and it floats. This is a major improvement safety-wise, especially for winter nest checks on the ice. 97-16 9/8/97 BLA

TABLE 3

COMPARISON CHART

1993-1997 NEST STRUCTURE SUMMARY

MORRIS WETLAND MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Structure Type	Nest Sites/ Structure	Number Structures Available	No/Percent Structures Used	Total Number Nests	No/Percent Success	No/Percent Predated	No/Percent Abandoned	No/Percent Unknown Fate
Double Cylinder - 1993	2	49	7 / 14%	11 (D)	10 / 91%	0	1 / 9%	0
- 1994	2	23	9 / 39%	12 (D)	7 / 58%	0	5 / 42%	0
- 1995	2	87	38 / 44%	52 (D)	43 / 83%	0	9 / 17%	0
- 1996	2	89	53 / 60%	78 (D)	55 / 71%	2 / 3%	21 / 27%	0
- 1997	2	83	42 / 51%	69 (D)	47 / 68%	0	21 / 30%	1 / 1%
Cedar Boxes - 1993	3	25	3 / 12%	1 (D) 2 (G)	0 2 / 100%	0 0	0 0	1 / 100% 0
- 1994	3	17	10 / 59%	9 (D) 4 (G)	8 / 89% 4 / 100%	0 0	1 / 11% 0	0 0
- 1995	3	16	13 / 81%	21 (D) 1 (G)	19 / 90% 1 / 100%	1 / 5% 0	1 / 5% 0	0 0
- 1996	3	14	12 / 86%	22 (D) 2 (G)	16 / 73% 2 / 100%	1 / 5% 0	4 / 18% 0	1 / 5% 0
- 1997	3	11	9 / 82%	14 (D) 3 (G)	8 / 57% 3 / 100%	3 / 21%	2 / 14%	1 / 7%
Single Cylinder - 1994	1	96	23 / 24%	23 (D)	18 / 78%	2 / 9%	3 / 13%	
- Hay or Fiberglass								
- 1995	1	90	31 / 34%	31 (D)	26 / 84%	2 / 6%	3 / 10%	
- 1996	1	82	45 / 55%	56 (D)	48 / 86%	2 / 4%	5 / 9%	1 / 2%
- 1997	1	81	46 / 57%	49 (D)	39 / 79%	4 / 8%	2 / 5%	4 / 8%

G=Goose

D = Duck (~90% Mallards)

TABLE 4

COMPARISON CHART

1995-1997 SATURATION TEST

MORRIS WETLAND MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Structure Type	Nest Sites/ Structure	Number Structures Available	No/Percent Structures Used	Total Number Nests	No/Percent Success	No/Percent Predated	No/Percent Abandoned	No/Percent Unknown Fate
Saturation Test - 1995 - 3 Types in 3 Wetlands								
Floater	3	12	12	25	16	6	3	0
Fiberglass	3	12	8	10	6	2	2	0
2 cyl on basket	3	10	7	13	8	0	5	0
1995 Totals		34	27 / 79%	48	30 / 63%	8 / 17%	10 / 21%	0
Saturation Test - 1996 - 3 Types in 3 Wetlands								
Floater	3	12	12	26	18	0	5	3
Fiberglass	3	10	10	19	13	0	5	1
2 cyl on basket	2	11	11	17	11	0	6	0
1996 Totals		33	33 / 100%	62	42 / 68%	0	16 / 26%	4 / 6%
Saturation Test - 1997 - 3 Types in 3 Wetlands								
Floater	3	12	12	31	14	8	3	6
Fiberglass	3	9	9	13	10	0	3	0
2 cyl on basket	2	10	10	20	18	0	2	0
1997 Totals		31	31 / 100%	64	42 / 66%	8 / 13%	8 / 13%	6 / 9%

Project 1 - Double Cylinder (Table 3)

Determine use and success of 150 pole structures converted from Ducks Unlimited fiberglass baskets to a pole with two nesting cylinders attached. Conversion was accomplished by simply wiring two carpet/hay cylinders on top of the basket. This type has been found to protect nesters from predation and offers two nesting sites per structure (nesting under and on top of the two cylinders has also occurred). Of the 150 structures available, 83 were checked. Of these, 42 were used with 69 nests initiated. Of these, 47 hatched, 0 were predated, 21 were abandoned and one was fate unknown. This nesting structure type hatched 0.57 nests per structure in 1997.

Project 2 - Cedar Boxes (Table 3)

Determine use and success of a cedar box pole structure designed for easy construction and maintenance. This was the fifth year of monitoring. Spring ice damage continues to be a problem and now only 11 of the original 25 remain. All but two boxes were used in 1997. They continue to show good potential after their very slow start the first year. This structure had an impressive 1.25 nests per structure hatch rate in 1995, 1.29 in 1996 and 1.0 in 1997.

Project 3 - Single Cylinder (Table 3)

Continue monitoring the hay and fiberglass nest structures to determine usage rate changes, saturation level, predation problems, maintenance problems, etc. Usage remained quite constant in 1997 and nest success was an impressive 79 percent.

Project 4 - Saturation Test (Table 4)

Determine the preferred structure type, most successful, and nest structure density limit on three separate wetlands located on Dismal Swamp WPA in Big Stone County, Schultz WPA in Stevens County, and Walden WPA in Pope County. The three nest structure types placed were the cedar floater, double cylinder on fiberglass Ducks Unlimited basket, and fiberglass cylinder (Backes). All of the 31 structures available were used. They contained 64 duck nests of which 42 hatched, 8 were predated, 8 were abandoned, and 6 were unknown fate. The cedar floater was the type used most. They had 31 nests initiated with 14 hatching. Predation was a problem on floating structure types this year. Abandonment decreased from 16 to 8 nests. Rough weather and possibly scavenging birds were responsible for eliminating evidence resulting in the 6 fate unknowns.

Another key goal of this saturation test is to obtain and share reliable information with the increasing number of citizens who wish to maximize wildlife use and production on their own small acreage. Early indications are encouraging as several individual citizens and clubs are experiencing results similar to ours.

Overall, 139 nests hatched successfully from 206 structures monitored in the four projects. Excellent habitat conditions from the above average precipitation has likely influenced results. We continue to learn and share our results with a receptive Minnesota public that wants to know what will work on their property.....so we keep learning. We are mindful that it is easy to raise waterfowl in a wet cycle and expect benefits to be most significant when the dry years return.

Summarized are all four 1997 project results:

- 206 structures available for use
- 122 (59 percent) structures were used
- 199 nests initiated
- 139 (70 percent) nests were successful
- 15 (8 percent) nests were predated
- 33 (17 percent) nests were abandoned
- 12 (6 percent) nests were of unknown fate

4e. Pest, Predator, and Exotic Animal Control

Beaver complaints were minimal this year compared to the last several. This year only one beaver was removed from Blue Mounds WPA compared to 10 and 22 the last two years. The beaver exclusion devices that are in place are working great. One exclusion device was replaced this year. The exclusion devices have saved many hours of dam and debris removal. One Clemson Beaver Pond Leveler (CBPL) was repaired. There currently are six wire panel devices and three CBPL's on District WPA's.

Two raccoon were removed from residences by our staff. Both animals were near the Perkins Lake area. Both seemed as though they were tame.

One electric predator fence is maintained each year. It encloses approximately 16 acres.

Each year we receive complaints of dogs chasing deer. This winter was especially bad because of the deep snow. The dogs were able to run on top of the snow making the deer easy targets.

COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

5a. Interagency Coordination

Staff members Radtke, Lewis, Haugen, Raitz, Henderson, and Oglesby spent 410 hours assisting NRCS offices in Swift, Pope, Lac qui Parle, and Yellow Medicine counties during the 15th CRP signup. Thirty additional hours reviewing approximately 25 CP23 wetland restoration projects for the Lac qui Parle County NRCS office was also conducted.

Seventy-six hours of assistance were given to SWCD offices in Swift and Chippewa Counties reviewing permanent RIM and PWP easements.

Staff members served on county, area, and state Department of Agriculture committees in establishing guidelines for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program administered by the county NRCS and FSA offices.

Lewis and Raitz assisted NRCS with reviewing 32 new proposals for minimal effect, mitigation, restoration, and drainage maintenance agreements. Wetland Appeal determinations were reviewed on 12 areas with eight landowners. We also submitted five wetland impact reports to FSA, Minnesota DNR, and Corps of Engineers.

Staff members participated in county Conservation Review Group meetings and county water planning meetings.

Staff members worked with other agencies such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts, local watershed boards, NRCS, county highway departments, landowners, etc., on water issues.

5c. Private Land Activities

The Pope County Environmental Services Office asked us to work with them on a cleanup project for the watershed of Trappers Run Creek. The Pope County office located one 20-30 acre wetland restoration project in the watershed in which they would secure the easement and the Fish and Wildlife Service would design and pay restoration costs. The project fell through, however, when the landowner was able to raise a very productive crop in the basin this year. He is able to do this once in every ten years.

We worked with the Niemackel Lake watershed project by restoring one five-acre wetland and seeding ten surrounding acres to native prairie grasses. The Niemackel Lake Watershed Project secured the ten year agreement and the Fish and Wildlife Service provided the seed, drill and operator, and wetland restoration costs.

We experienced difficulties in obtaining the watershed permit from the Bois de Sioux Watershed District for the Niemackel wetland restoration project. Everyone involved in wetland restoration projects in Minnesota had agreed upon wetland restoration guidelines developed in cooperation by the various agencies. The Bois de Sioux Watershed decided they would require the Fish and Wildlife Service to design extra flood storage capabilities in all of our restoration projects. This matter will need to be resolved in FY 98.

Our on-going relationship with the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District continued in 1997. Kyle Kirkeby's fourth grade class at Ortonville Public School donated money and adopted a wetland restoration project through a class project. This is the third year that he has done this. Kirkeby's fourth grade class raised \$200 through the sale of student chewing gum permits at the school. The Citizens of Big Stone Lake donated \$800 to the project for a fund raising total of \$1,000. The Upper Minnesota River Watershed District matched their fund raising donation 2:1 raising the total to \$3,000. The money was then donated to the Morris WMD Partners for Wildlife Program and matched by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan through the Region's Challenge Grant Program. In the end the fourth graders class project raised \$6,000 toward wetland restoration projects in the Upper Minnesota River Watershed.

Only one meeting of the Chippewa River Stewardship Partnership was held during the year. There has been some discussion whether the partnership should dissolve and join the Chippewa River Council, a new group which formed along the entire length of the Chippewa River. At this point the Council's main objectives are to monitor water quality sites along the river.

This year the Morris WMD, in cooperation with the University of Minnesota-Morris, started a pilot livestock grazing program. Four local livestock producers were contacted. Two of the four agreed to participate. The Morris WMD supplied 2 1/2 miles of electric fence at a cost of \$3,560.07. In return for the fence material, the landowners agreed to manage their pastures in a rotational grazing system which will enhance upland nesting cover and wildlife habitat. A total of 440 acres will be impacted.



The Frederickson native grass pasture bordering Glacial Lake WPA is one of the privately owned pastures signed up under our private lands rotational grazing program. The pastures were to be fenced in 1997 with the rotational grazing program beginning in 1998. 97-17 8/1/97 BLA

This was the first field season the grass drills, purchased for private lands native grass seedings, were used. Sixteen land-owners used the drills to plant approximately 360 acres to a grass cover.

The Morris WMD had two full time FTE's for the private lands program during FY 1997. Funding for the program came from the Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Wildlife funds, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and private donations. The FY 1997 budget was \$115,000 with an additional \$11,000 from the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and \$17,786 from private donations. This budget covers salaries, supplies, and construction costs for new restorations as well as repairs on past projects.

CONTRIBUTED FUNDS FOR FY97

North American Waterfowl Management Plan	\$11,000
Ducks Unlimited	6,302
Sauk River Watershed District	7,199
Upper Minnesota River Watershed District	2,113
Swift County Pheasants Forever	1,650
Stevens County Pheasants Forever	<u>504</u>
Total	\$28,768

Swampbuster

Since its 1985 passage, the swampbuster provisions of the Farm Bill legislation had mandated Service involvement in wetland appeals, exemption requests, turn-ins of potential wetland conversion violations, minimal effect/drainage maintenance/mitigation requests, and the wetland reserve program. Now the 1995 rules have changed the Service's role to one of voluntary invited involvement. This leaves us with very little authority. Rules and policy remain unclear as our role is increasingly diluted.

Wetland Appeals

The wetland appeal process was initiated when a landowner challenged the NRCS determination that areas of his property were classified "wetland." As a consultant, the Service employee and the NRCS representative would visit the site, review FSA slides, check available wetland inventories, and then confirm or reverse the initial NRCS determination. Most determinations were upheld and most NRCS field offices appeared to be doing a reasonable job, although sometimes rather obvious wetlands were not on the NRCS initial map. Disturbing is the current NRCS policy preventing missed wetlands from being added. If the landowner disagrees with the wetlands shown on his property he owns or rents he may appeal his determination to the next level of authority. However, appeal rights favoring wetlands protection are conspicuously lacking.

In FY 97, the Morris Wetland staff reviewed eight landowner appeals involving 12 potential wetlands. Cumulative totals since the beginning of swampbuster are 1,063 appeals involving 2,988 areas. Appeal activities were much reduced due primarily to the 1995 policy change reducing Service role and authority.

Exemption Requests

Another portion of the Farm Bill Swampbuster legislation allows landowners or ditch authorities exemption from swampbuster provisions if they meet third party criteria.

Third party exemption provisions are intended for situations where a landowner has no control over or involvement in wetland conversion activities done by a "third party." No third party exemptions were applied for in FY 97. Often a landowner wants a township or similar entity to drain something on his behalf. When this occurs, they are clearly not third party victims and exemption criteria doesn't apply. Rules properly applied prevent bogus third party approvals.

Turn-ins of Potential Wetland Conversion Violations

Another key role has been our reporting of potential violations. Swampbuster legislation of 1985 was very severe and did little to encourage enforcement or wetland restoration. The 1990 and 1995 regulations reduced penalties and encourage restorations, although indications are 1995 regulations may be too lax to be effective.

In FY 97, six Wetland Impact Reports of potential wetland conversions were sent to FSA offices in the Morris District. A total of 230 have been submitted since swampbuster began. The 1985 legislation required wetland conversion, seeding, and participation in Federal farm programs before benefits could be withheld. Changes in the 1990 Farm Bill made only the act of converting a wetland the trigger for penalties and encouraged restoration of the wetland.

Swampbuster, combined with Corps of Engineers 404 authority and the new Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Act, have done much to curb drainage. We have gained respectful attention of most drainage proponents and have witnessed a significant reduction in drainage, especially involving larger wetlands. Old opportunities to purchase and destroy larger wetlands for profit without being challenged no longer exist. The message we hope to groom is "If you buy a wetland--you own a wetland--and you have a social obligation to pass it on intact to future generations."

Minimal Effect/Drainage Maintenance Agreements/Mitigation Requests

The minimal effect evaluation and agreement are for activities which have a truly minimal effect on the hydrological and biological functions of a wetland. Drainage Maintenance Agreements are for drainage systems through a wetland (W) which has an outlet for PC, FW or FWP areas and limited maintenance can be justified. Mitigation is the replacement of lost wetland functions and values by restoring a previously and effectively drained wetland of equal or greater size.

Thirty-two minimal effect, drainage maintenance or mitigation requests were processed in FY 97. Minimal effect and drainage maintenance requests must meet rather strict criteria or they are denied. Many of those approved required modifications to eliminate or minimize wetland impacts. Many applications this year came from counties where exceptionally high water from flooding created several situations justifying temporary drainage because roads or buildings were threatened.

So far few mitigation proposals have been approved. Generally, existing wetlands are proposed for improvement and a true "No net loss" equation is not offered.

Wetland Reserve Program

The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary USDA program that offers landowners a chance to receive payment for restoring and protecting wetlands on their property. An easement payment is offered for the wetland acres and a small buffer zone. Cost sharing is allowed for the wetland restoration.

Good in theory, the program doesn't impact many areas or acres in comparison to the old waterbank program. WRP needs much improvement to be competitive with other wetland programs in Minnesota such as RIM, FWS easements, and CRP.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

After much debate, a continued CRP program was finally approved. Minnesota fared poorly in the first signup of FY 97 but came out well in the second signup after correction to water quality, endangered species and land values were accomplished. Most agree that CRP has been the best wildlife program since the Soil Bank Program of the 1950's and 1960's. There is widespread support from conservation organizations and farm groups for continuing CRP. We hope this all too important program maintains liberal funding and sound direction.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

6a. Law Enforcement

Two people on the Morris staff had law enforcement authority during the year; they are officers Lewis and Raitz.

Most enforcement activities are associated with wetland drainage violations or resolving WPA problems. Citations are seldom used in resolving these problems but the training and the authority to arrest or cite an individual are essential assets in these contacts. State Conservation Officers have primary responsibility for hunting season enforcement. We maintain good rapport with these State Officers and work cooperatively during waterfowl season and upon request in other situations.

This year we had approximately 20 incidents and five NOV's and State Citations issued. Also, approximately 19 miles of boundary were posted/maintained.

6b. Permits and Economic Use Management



High water problems the last several years have generated many drainage permit requests. This overflow ditch on Hanson WPA was allowed due to health and safety issues associated with an adjacent road. Not all permit requests are granted; each is looked at individually and a determination is made.

During FY97, a total of 40 special use permits were issued. The majority of these permits were issued for cutting hay, grazing, or cash rent (Section 3). Two permits were issued to professors related to studies (Section 1). Three permits were issued to individuals wanting to trap pocket gophers. Big Stone County Highway Department was given a permit for public safety to lower a wetland which flooded a road by Thompson WPA.

6f. Cultural Resources Management

All historical surveys for acquisition or right-of-way requests came back negative, so there is nothing to report for this year.

6g. Land Acquisition Support

Fee Title

Three new fee tracts totaling 200.42 acres were added to the Morris Wetland Management District in 1997. This compares to 720 acres in 1996. All three tracts were roundouts to existing waterfowl production areas. Therefore, the current fee acreage of 49,526.48 represents 66 percent of the Morris District's goal acres.

In 1997 the management of Lundgren Waterfowl Production Area located in Chippewa County was transferred to Morris WMD from Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge.

WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREA ACREAGE - MORRIS WMD - 1997

<u>County</u>	<u>Acquisition</u> <u>Total 12/31/96</u>		<u>Acquisition</u> <u>Total 09/30/97</u>		<u>Goal</u> <u>Acres</u>
	<u>Units</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Big Stone	61	10,777.89	61	10,777.89	15,600
Chippewa			1	164.10	---
Lac qui Parle	17	3,405.49	17	3,526.70	6,600
Pope	63	13,136.25	63	13,136.25	21,000
Stevens	55	9,235.82	55	9,315.03	12,850
Swift	30	7,579.03	30	7,579.03	10,800
Traverse	12	4,063.63	12	4,063.63	6,720
Yellow Medicine	5	963.85	5	963.85	1,260
Total	243	49,161.96	244	49,526.48	74,830

The continuing low annual revenue sharing payments and other problems make it difficult to obtain county certification and thereby discourages the Wetland Manager from being aggressive

in going after fee areas. More emphasis on wetland habitat protection easements also reduced the time available for realtors to work on fee tracts. The fee program is slow and probably will remain that way.

The long term future of fee acquisition continues to be an unknown. The farm economy, revenue sharing, Service staff time, acquisition funding, Land Exchange Board attitude, emphasis on easement work, and many other factors will influence its future. However, one thing is certain, sufficient wetland habitat still exists for the Morris District to reach its fee acquisition goals.

The tax loss issue continues to be one of the Service's greatest hurdles to future acquisitions. A trust fund payment is made to the County government with each new fee purchase where revenue sharing is short. The interest from the trust fund payment, when invested at the current one-year treasury bill rate, should make up the difference between the revenue sharing payments and the taxes that would be paid on land if it remained private property.

The payments will only be made in cases where the estimated revenue sharing payment for the land is less than the current taxes on the property. It is up to the counties to decide what to do with the payments. Previously purchased lands are not covered by this new plan. The County Commissioners appreciate this change in the Service's program but don't consider it the answer to the revenue sharing problem and all our "back taxes."

The acquisition of cropland is the other major concern that is becoming more popular with local citizens and County Commissioners opposing our program. The Stevens, Lac qui Parle, Big Stone, and Pope County Commissioners expressed concern of losing cropland acres for local farmers. It has even been mentioned as a reason to deny grassland easements.

A county by county analysis of current and future acquisition follows:

Big Stone County

The Fish and Wildlife Service currently owns approximately 10,778 fee acres in Big Stone County, not including Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge. This represents 69 percent of the 15,600 acre goal.

Land acquisition is not an easy task in Big Stone County at the present time. Tax loss seems to be a major issue with the County Commissioners and Zoning Commission. They are also uncomfortable with the fee acres purchased because of the loss of farmable land. However, the Service has always been successful in Big Stone County until late in 1996 when the Shriner's tract near Artichoke Lake was not recommended by the Zoning Commission and not certified by the County Commissioners. In part this problem was caused by a major

controversy involving a Minnesota DNR acquisition project with spinoff effects on our project. Hopefully the Service will soon challenge such local action by going to the Land Exchange Board so that a wider range of interest groups can express opinions on the proposal.

It seems that habitat protection easements and wetland easements are facing an ever increasing level of opposition. Local officials have allowed easements in the past because it seemed to be a better option than fee acquisition.

Chippewa County

Management of the 164 acre Lundgren WPA was transferred to Morris from Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge.

Lac qui Parle County

Two fee tracts were purchased in this county in 1997. The Schlieman tract added 41.21 acres to the Hastad WPA and 80 acres were added to Garfield WPA with the purchase from Roger Hanson. The County Commissioners would rather not see the Service continue to purchase land but we probably can push tracts through if the tax issue is solved. The Commissioners have had no problem in certifying our easements. One 60 acre grassland easement was taken in 1997.

Pope County

No fee tracts were purchased in Pope County in 1997. Fee purchases are not popular with the Board and it would be difficult to get certification. The Pope County Commissioners require us to go to the Township Boards for their opinion. The Commissioners use this method to slow our efforts and to reduce their responsibility. Our easement program is active in Pope County and has received only minor opposition from the Commissioners. Two wetland easements were purchased in 1997.

Stevens County

The 240 acre Berger tract was purchased and certification by the Commissioners was obtained in 1996. The Berger tract is a roundout to the Johnson WPA near Donnelly. The Commissioners then did an about-face by denying certification of the 79.21 acre Kramer tract that was also a roundout to the Johnson WPA and actually cornered on the Berger tract. Apparently the Commissioners had intended to deny the Berger tract also but "goofed up" their pre-meeting plan when someone voted wrong during the regular meeting. The Service pursued the Kramer case at the Land Exchange Board level early in 1997 and it was accepted. Stevens County will be a difficult county to do business in under the present Commissioners.

Swift County

No fee tracts were purchased in 1997. One small grassland easement was taken. Getting certification from the Swift County Zoning Commission and the Commissioners will always be a challenge but the Service has an excellent record of success. Revenue Sharing is the major obstacle of fee purchases in Swift County.

Traverse County

No fee or easements were purchased in 1997.

Yellow Medicine County

No fee or easements were purchased in 1997.

REVENUE SHARING PAYMENTS - MORRIS WMD

<u>County</u>	<u>FY95</u>	<u>FY96</u>	<u>FY97</u>
Big Stone	\$19,067	\$21,024	\$27,902
Chippewa		446	407
Lac qui Parle	5,575	6,215	7,612
Pope	24,615	27,142	24,779
Stevens	22,812	25,154	24,373
Swift	19,544	25,351	23,143
Traverse	10,062	14,577	13,308
Yellow Medicine	<u>2,753</u>	<u>3,319</u>	<u>3,701</u>
Total	\$104,428	\$123,228	\$125,225

Revenue sharing payments are important to our acquisition program. The county commissioners are always interested in the percentage of the calculated annual payment their counties receive. The reduced payments are now causing the slowdown of acquisition in several counties in Minnesota. Big Stone, Swift, and Pope Counties will probably not certify additional fee tracts until 100 percent payments are received.

Easements

Approximately 34 wetland acres were added by the four Wetland Easements and Wildlife Habitat Protection (grassland) Easements. The Grassland Easement is a new type added in 1993 and will be explained in detail later in this section.

EASEMENT PROGRAM STATUS - MORRIS WMD - 1997

<u>County</u>	<u>Easements</u>	<u>Wetland Acres</u>	<u>Total Easement Acres</u>	<u>Total Goal Acres</u>
Big Stone	185	6,469	23,483.71	42,640
Chippewa	0			
Lac qui Parle	28	946	3,077.75	23,540
Pope	219	8,186	31,432.00	44,180
Stevens	51	1,648	4,418.28	6,090
Swift	55	1,154	4,269.35	14,540
Traverse	33	1,081	3,696.96	8,440
Yellow Medicine	<u>7</u>	<u>149</u>	<u>527.27</u>	<u>7,860</u>
Total 1997	578	19,633	71,178.32	147,290
Total 1996	574	19,599	70,760.32	147,290
Total 1995	567	19,440	69,691.73	147,290
Total 1994	540	18,716	66,930.81	147,290
Total 1993	506	17,984	64,049.78	147,290



Liatris found on the Erickson prairie presently being considered for easement. 97-19 8/13/97 BLA

Wetland Easement

Two wetland easements were taken in 1997. Under the terms of a wetland easement, the Service purchases the rights to burn, drain or fill wetlands from a willing seller. Easements of highest priority have been those which would preserve wetlands within two miles of a waterfowl production area. However, wetlands located near Minnesota Department of Natural Resource's Wildlife Management Areas or other acceptable nesting cover can also be protected by easement. A large portion of the wetland easements currently being purchased are on restored wetlands. This probably will be the trend as long as the private lands program remains active.

The future of the easement program continues to be directly related to funds and manpower available to our Division of Realty. If manpower was available for additional "door knocking," many other easements could be taken. Numerous wetlands are still available that need protection. Hopefully this program will continue until goal acres are acquired or there are no unprotected basins remaining in western Minnesota.

The county boards of commissioners must review all easement proposals for certification as with fee tracts. Easement certification has usually been routine in the past. However, opposition is increasing. The major objection is placing easements on restored wetlands that were previously considered cropland. Many Commissioners view that as a loss of productive agricultural land and are concerned that the conversion to marsh will reduce the tax revenue. All of the objections were handled at the field and none were elevated to the Land Exchange Board level.

Wildlife Habitat Protection Easements

The Fish and Wildlife Service introduced the new Wildlife Habitat Protection Easement in 1993. This easement is primarily aimed at preserving native tallgrass prairie. However, it can be used for other upland sites to enhance production habitat.

Four types of the easement are available with some grazing and/or haying options; otherwise the easement is very restrictive and allows virtually no uses except walking, hunting and trapping. The landowner is required to pay taxes and control the noxious weeds. The easement is perpetual with a one-time payment to the landowner.

Two grassland easements were purchased this year. The 60 acre Bonde tract is located in Lac qui Parle County. This tract has two wetland development projects and will add approximately 45 acres of upland nesting habitat to the Goodman WPA. The Glimsdal tract in Swift County will add 27 acres to the Lubenow WPA and to the Koosmann easement purchased in 1996.



Erickson prairie in Lac qui Parle County. One of the nicest privately owned native prairie remaining in our District. We are currently negotiating a Habitat Easement with the landowner. 97-20 8/13/97 BLA

EASEMENTS FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT PROTECTION - 1997

<u>County</u>	<u>Easements</u>	<u>HO</u>	<u>GO</u>	<u>HG</u>	<u>NHG</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Big Stone	0				0	0.00
Chippewa	0				0	0.00
Lac qui Parle	1				1	60.00
Pope	0				0	0.00
Stevens	0				0	0.00
Swift	1				1	27.00
Traverse	0				0	0.00
Yellow Medicine	0	—	—	—	0	0.00
1997 Totals	2	0	0	0	2	87.00
1996 Totals	2	1	0	0	1	267.55
1995 Totals	5	0	0	0	5	226.65
1994 Totals	9	1	0	0	8	600.44
Grand Total	18	2	0	0	16	1,181.64

HG - Allow haying and grazing
 HO - Allow haying only
 GO - Allow grazing only
 NHG - No haying or grazing allowed

The new Habitat Protection Easements must have County Commissioner approval and Land Exchange Board certification in the same manner as the Wetland Easement. This new easement also counts against the goal easement acreage set for each Minnesota county.



Bruce Bonde using the private lands grass drill to re-establish native grass on his Habitat Easement. 97-21 6/9/97 WAH

The preservation of native prairie is the primary objective of the grassland easement work in the Morris District. Less than one percent of the original 18 million acres of native prairie in Minnesota remains unbroken. Some of the tracts accepted are being enhanced or "squared up" by seeding local species of native grasses and forbs on cropland adjacent to the original prairie tracts. The Service is providing the seed and doing the seeding in these cases.



Downy gentian (*Gentianaceae puberula*).
97-22 9/17/97 BLA

Farmers Home Administration Conservation Easements

The Dale Hanson tract in Chippewa County was the only Farmers Home Administration Conservation Easement processed in 1997. A total of 21 easement tracts are now under permanent protection.

Only minimum management of FmHA tracts is currently conducted because of our funding shortage. Old cropland is usually seeded back to wildlife cover under an agreement with the new landowner. Wetland restoration has been done force account or under contract if funds are available. Most posting has been completed and is being kept current.

FmHA ACCOMPLISHMENTS - MORRIS WMD - 1997

<u>County</u>	<u>Farms Reviewed</u>	<u>Service Deed Restrictions</u>	<u>Wetland Plugs Completed</u>	<u>Service Total Easements In Place</u>	<u>Total Esmt Acre</u>
Big Stone	0	0	0	1	4.82
Chippewa	0	0	0	1	63.20
Lac qui Parle	0	0	0	1	30.13
Pope	0	0	0	5	219.13
Stevens	0	0	0	1	73.55
Swift	0	0	1	9	490.61
Traverse	0	0	0	0	0.00
Yellow Medicine	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>342.68</u>
1997 Total	0	0	1	21	1224.12
1996 Total	1	1	0	20	1160.92
1995 Total	4	4	0	20	1160.92
1994 Total	4	4	2	16	1050.77
1993 Total	5	5	2	10	825.33
1992 Total	8	5	0	0	0
1991 Total	3	3	0	0	0

New guidelines put into effect by the U. S. Department of Agriculture in 1996 have greatly reduced our desire and opportunity to place restrictions on tracts in the future. It is anticipated that only wetlands in specific locations near fee areas and old easement tracts will be considered for restrictions.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RECREATION

8a. Provide Visitor Services

A total of 44,532 people visited and participated in some activity at Morris WMD in FY97.

Morris held an Open House on August 19, 1997, to officially open its nature-hiking trail system. The first section contains a 550 foot long, 8 foot wide paved path looping through native prairie. This part is fully accessible by people with physical disabilities. Another section is a 1.2 mile long nature-hiking trail that starts from the office building, going through native prairie, woodlands, and around a 26 acre wetland, and ending back at the office. Adjoining the above nature-hiking trail is a parking lot, 450 foot long trail, and observation deck (on wetland edge).



This class from Minnewaska High School enjoyed a hike around the walking trail. The student on the left is in a wheel chair. The entire trail is not set up for wheel chair accessibility but this student was able to make the entire trail with a little help. 97-23 9/26/97 BLA

In the eight county region, 244 waterfowl production areas provided 40,892 hunters opportunities for hunting migratory birds, upland game, and big game. Also, fishing and trapping activities occur in smaller numbers as does beach and water use, and other recreation.

A significant part of our staff's effort goes into education/interpretation. Some of the people reached through our environmental education efforts include students taught on or off sight, teacher workshops, school programs, scouts, etc.

On August 11, 1997, the Morris Wetland Office announced the closing of a portion of Edwards Waterfowl Production Area to public hunting. Approximately 170 acres were posted with signs to identify the closed area (Morris Office, adjoining nature-hiking trail system, and a portion of the James Gritman Wetland and Wildlife Demonstration Area).

Partnerships

The Morris WMD was one of the sponsors for the Natural History Series. The series of environmental educational programs is directed towards the entire family. Programs included the following:

1. **Touch and See.** Held in conjunction with KMRS/KKOK Farm and Health Show. Featured interactive question board, demonstration and information on wildlife.
2. **The Common Loon.** Katie Haws, Minnesota DNR Non-Game Specialist, told about Minnesota's state bird.
3. **Deformed Frogs and Our Environment.** University of Minnesota-Morris professor of Biology David Hoppee explained the deformed frog development and aspect of his frog research project.
4. **Birding Breakfast.** Early morning bird walk followed by a pancake breakfast (Donna Oglesby was one of four guides who led groups). Glacial Lake State Park was the site for this event.
5. **Bees, Butterflies and Blossoms.** Joan Leong, assistant professor of Biology from the University of Minnesota told the process of pollination and some of the common and unusual insects that pollinate plants.
6. **Prairie Windflower Walk.** University of Minnesota-Morris professors Ellen Ordway and Margaret Kuchenreuther identified and discussed facts and lore about prairie plants found on Stewart WPA, Pope County.
7. **Wild Turkeys.** Dick Kimmel, Minnesota DNR Research Biologist, discussed recent re-introductions and wild turkey management program.

Educator Workshops

Morris WMD hosted Enviro 2000 on October 6, 1996. A University of Minnesota-Morris Native Prairie Teacher Workshop was held on June 8, 1997. People, Purpose and Place: Ecological Approach Agriculture Workshop was held June 29, 1997.

Other

- Morris WMD was the site of the Morris Fifth Grade Science Project - April 1, 1997
- Morris school looked at jobs at Morris WMD for "Career Days" - May 2, 1997
- International Migratory Bird Day Bird Walk - May 9, 1997
- Second Grade Wetland Day - May 21, 1997



Mary Ann Scharf, from the University of Minnesota Extension Service, helped out with our fifth annual Second Grade Wetland Field Day. This is a very popular station because the kids get to eat the "glacier" when the presentation is done. The glacier consists of ice cream, peanuts, oreo cookies, and chocolate chips. 97-24 5/21/97 BLA

- Hancock School's Bird Day - May 28, 1997
- University of Minnesota-Morris Soil Class study area - September 9, 1997
- Morris Tenth Grade collected prairie seeds and rolled nest cylinders - September 19, 1997
- Junior high students from Minnewaska Area School visited the site - September 26, 1997

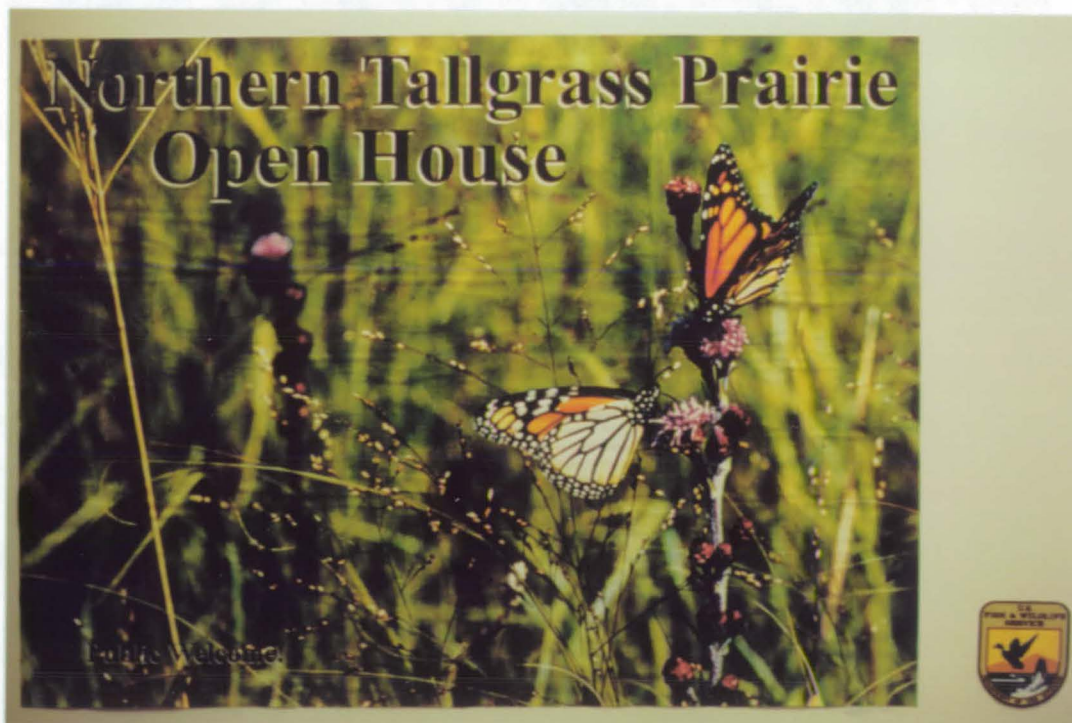
8b. Outreach

Our public outreach efforts reached 15,439 people. Listed below are some of the groups and activities that the Morris staff was involved with. There were many group presentations such as local 4-H chapters, Stevens County Homemakers, Envirothon, Browns Valley Resource Day, and Big Stone State Park Prairie World Festival. Some exhibits that were set up and attended by the staff included Duck Habitat Days, Morris Farm and Home Show, Science Expo, North American Waterfowl Federation Meeting, Jake Day (Wild Turkey Federation), West Central Horticultural Night, Prairie Pothole Day, and National Wildlife Refuge Week. Other educational outreach the staff was involved with include Morris Area High School's Science Fair, and Minnesota Waterfowl Association's Woody Camp.

Five news releases were issued, three radio/tv spots were held, and nine special events happened in the Morris District.

Proposed Tallgrass Prairie Refuge

This proposed refuge would preserve some of the remaining tracts of tallgrass prairie in an area from Des Moines, Iowa, to Manitoba, Canada. Al Radtke and Bernie Angus assisted in writing the Environmental Impact Statement for this proposed action. The public was invited to comment on the Statement at open houses held at various locations within the area covered. Al assisted at three open houses, one of which was held at Morris WMD.



The photo used on the cover of this Northern Tallgrass Prairie Open House brochure was taken by Bernie Angus.

97-25 9/30/97 BLA

PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

9a. Comprehensive Conservation Planning

The Minnesota Waterfowl and Wetlands Complex started development of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan. An open house for the public's input into the process is planned for fall 1997.

9b. General Administration



8 5 6 12 4 11
10 7 2 1 3 9

1. Alfred L. Radtke, Wetland Manager, GM-13, PFT.
2. Gaylord J. Bober, Refuge Operations Specialist, GS-12, PFT.
3. Bernard L. Angus, Soil Conservationist, GS-11, PFT.
4. Larry E. Lewis, Wildlife Biologist, GS-12, PFT.
5. Darrell D. Haugen, Wildlife Biologist, GS-11, PFT.
6. Chad G. Raitz, Refuge Operations Specialist, GS-9, PFT.
7. Donna M. Oglesby, Biological Technician, GS-7, PFT.
8. Wayne A. Henderson, Wildlife Biologist, GS-9, PFT.
9. Kenton G. Moos, Biological Technician, GS-7, PFT,
E.O.D. 3/30/97.
10. Karen M. Stettner, Administrative Technician, GS-7, PFT.
11. Rodney G. Ahrndt, Engineering Equipment Operator, WG-8, PFT.
12. Victor H. Gades, Maintenance Worker, WG-7, PFT.
13. Kristofer L. Beuckens, Forestry Technician, GS-5,
PFT Seasonal.
14. Bryan P. Combs, Forestry Technician, GS-5, PFT Seasonal,
E.O.D. 6/22/97.

TEMPORARY PERSONNEL

Brant Wobig, Biological Technician, TFT, 4/13/97-11/29/97

OTHER

Tom Leonard, Green Thumb 4/02/96 - Present



Brant Wobig, Kristopher Beuckens and Bryan Combs

Personnel

MORRIS WMD STAFF SIZE, FY90-97

	Permanent Full Time	Permanent Full Time Seasonal	Permanent Part Time	Temporary GS & WG	Other Programs*
FY97	12	2	0	1	1
FY96	12	1	0	2	2
FY95	12	1	0	2	2
FY94	12	2	0	1	3
FY93	12	2	0	2	2
FY92	11	2	0	3	6
FY91	10	1	1	6	6
FY90	10	1	1	3	7

*YCC, CETA, Work Study, Green Thumb, etc.

This station started the year with two permanent positions vacant. On March 30, 1997, Mr. Kenton G. Moos arrived to fill the Biological Technician position. Kenton had been working at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in a temporary position. Bryan Combs filled the vacant Forestry Technician position and arrived at Morris on June 22. There was only one temporary hired this past summer and that was Brant Wobig as a Biological Technician.

Youth Programs

There was no YCC program at Morris WMD this year due to a lack of funds.

Other Manpower Programs

Green Thumb

The station served as a Green Thumb work site throughout the year. Mr. Tom Leonard worked between 20 and 24 hours per week at Morris under this program.

Volunteer Program

Volunteers continue to provide valuable assistance to the Morris District. A total of 129 volunteers contributed over 1,602 hours during FY 97. They contributed to the following projects: collecting prairie seeds, displays, filing, nest checks, Second Grade Field Day, office, shop and grounds maintenance, nesting structure maintenance, and rolling nesting cylinders.

The staff would like to increase the number of volunteers and continues to look for ways to reach out to the public.

Once again the sophomore class from Morris Area High School spent one day hand harvesting native forb seeds and rolled duck nesting cylinders. The total time volunteered by the class was approximately 300 hours. Ms. Sarah Huschle, a student at the University of Minnesota, Morris, volunteered on 12 different days and assisted in a wide range of projects including the public use program. Another notable volunteer was Connie Moos (Kenton's wife) who assisted in the office for seven days. Others volunteered various amounts of time during the year.

Funding

The station's total funding for the past six years is shown in the following table.

MORRIS WMD FUNDING LEVELS - FY91-FY97 (Dollars in Thousands)

FY	<u>1260</u>	Fire <u>9100</u>	<u>3110</u>	<u>YCC</u>	<u>1221</u>	<u>1230</u>	<u>1120</u>	Total <u>Budget</u>
97	585.6	34.5	5.0		-0-	14.8	115.0	754.9
96	584.3	36.5	5.0	-0-	1.0	15.7	102.0	744.5
95	536.2*	39.4	5.0	-0-	-0-	25.5	100.8	706.9**
94	596.2^	33.4	5.0	-0-	-0-	15.3	120.0	769.9
93	528.4	28.2	5.6	-0-	-0-	116.0	25.5	703.7
92	592.3^^	37.9	5.6	6.3	5.0	125.0	11.0	783.1
91	482.0	56.1	15.0	6.3	3.0	202.0	15.0	779.4

*Includes \$61,680 of project specific funds

**Does not include one time flood funds of \$217.6

^Includes \$220.8 of MMS and other project specific funds

^^Includes \$176.1 of MMS and other project specific funds

Toward the end of FY97 Morris received \$121,000 of funds to be used for repair of damages resulting from the spring flooding and last winter's snow damage. These funds can be spent over FY97 and FY98 and will be used primarily on boundary posting, repair of washed out trails, and repair of water control structures.

Safety

There were no accidents reported at this station during FY 97.

The entire staff has been tested for lyme disease. Temporaries and other personnel were tested the first and last day of work. Permanent personnel were tested once in late fall.

Following is a list of topics of our monthly meetings:

Anatomy of a Winter Storm	Low Voltage
Wader Safety	Railroad Crossings
Thunderstorm Safety	Tornado Safety
Modern Technology & Driving	Trucker Driving Safety
Lockout/Tagout System	On-The-Job Safety
First Aid on the Job	

The station Safety Committee, consisting of three staff members, rotates every three months and remains the most viable part of our safety program. This committee is responsible for planning and presenting our monthly safety meetings, conducting inspections, and accident investigations for the station.

The station now stands at 1,468 days without a lost-time accident.

Construction

There was no new construction at this station this year.

RehabilitationShop

The largest rehab project this year was the contract awarded to Riley Brothers Construction, Inc., for \$75,215. This contract consisted of removal of the concrete floor in the cold storage portion of the shop building, removal of pavement in the shop area, installation of a tile drainage system, new concrete floor and new pavement. The floor within the cold storage building had been raising each winter when the ground froze due to moisture. Hopefully the new tile system will dry up the subsurface and result in a normal life expectancy of the new concrete floor.



Re-surfacing shop parking area after tile drainage system was installed. 97-26 8/7/97 BLA

Entrance Sign

In accordance with regional office directive, the entrance sign in front of our headquarters site was replaced.



Out with the old..... 97-27 8/97 BLA



.....and in with the new. 97-28 9/3/97 BLA

Snow Damage

One of the unexpected occurrences of the excess snow this past winter was the drift that formed on the north side of the shop and extended up to the roof. There were two negative results of this drift; one being tons of snow on the parking area south of the building - the drift directed wind-blown snow over the building. The second was when the drift settled it pulled the soffit apart and snow blew into the building.



Snow drift on north side of shop. 97-29 2/6/97 BLA



Snow blown into building through damaged soffit.
97-30 1/17/97 BLA

Froland Nature Trail

The excess precipitation over the past year flooded out the nature trail on Froland WPA. A pipe and several yards of fill material were needed to repair the trail.



Rodney Ahrndt checking the new pipe along the nature trail on Froland WPA. 97-31 8/21/97 BLA



Backhoe shaping fill for nature trail on Froland WPA. 97-32 8/21/97 BLA

Benson Warehouse

The west warehouse at the Lynch Lake WPA had most of the three-ply roof material blown off by high winds during an August thunderstorm. The regional office provided funds for an emergency replacement. This station obtained the bids and CGS awarded the contract. The replacement roof was a single ply membrane versus the three ply hot tar roof that blew off. The cost of this repair was \$9,900.

Septic System

A riser was installed on the septic tank for the shop, and the shop and office systems were pumped.

Thunderstorms

During the summer, thunderstorms damaged the phone system. This is a yearly problem. The maintenance staff is quite good at repairing minor damage to the system.