

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Monitoring the Implementation of Property Master Plans

Property: Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area

Master Plan Year: 2010

Goal 1: Protect, restore and manage priority natural communities and associated rare and declining species

1.1: Establish outreach and assistance programs

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| MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Together with cooperating partners provide direct one-to-one technical assistance to area landowners. ▪ Create a series of brochures and education displays that provide information about the history and importance of grassland, savanna and stream ecosystems in SW Wisconsin. ▪ Share recommended conservation actions and priorities from Wisconsin's Wildlife Action Plan with other departments, agencies and organizations. ▪ Work with local groups to establish a "Cooperative Weed Management Area." |
| Accomplishments 2012 | <p>Conducted training for citizen-based monitoring bird survey – including pilot volunteer training and a pilot bird blitz event.</p> <p>Education and Outreach Team met February and May.</p> <p>Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area coordinator attended Statewide Cooperative Weed Management Area team meetings as SWGSCA representative. Unfortunately that position ran out of funding in September 2012 and we currently do not have someone acting as our liaison to it on our team.</p> <p>Natural Resources Board member attended field trip to 2012 Sherven acquisition (Jan. 2013).</p> <p>SWGSCA Core Team met in Dodgeville in February, May, and July, and November to discuss all aspects of conservation management in SWGSCA.</p> <p>SWGSCA brochure designed and published.</p> <p>Launched and updated SWGSCA website (www.swgsca.org).</p> |

1.2: Acquire, restore, and manage large permanent grassland areas and remnant habitat areas

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| <p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inventory, protect and manage key lands to permanently protect and buffer managed grasslands in and surrounding BCA cores, as well as remnant prairies, oak savanna (oak openings), some high-quality oak woodlands, and priority streams that are of particularly high quality, support rare species, or contribute to permanent managed grassland areas. ▪ Establish a coarse-grain habitat monitoring program that will include analyzing land-cover changes by tracking changes in habitat acreages using databases such as the EPA's National Land Cover Database and the NRCS's Natural Resources Inventory). ▪ Use computerized mapping in conjunction with field cover-mapping to track progress of protection over time in BCA cores as well as in small sites such as high quality prairies, savannas, and stream reaches. |
| <p>Accomplishments 2012</p> | <p>Acquired two properties within the Perry/Primrose Bird Conservation Area Core: 1) Sherven (201.6 acres), and 2) Gnewuch (134.3 acres). The two properties adjoin each other and amount to nearly 336 acres of contiguous grassland habitat for grassland bird species. The Sherven parcel is wide open grassland, with gently rolling hills. Numerous prairie remnants are scattered across the property. The Gnewuch parcel, also with gently rolling terrain and open grasslands, offers scattered clumps of open grown oak trees along with a handful of prairie remnants. State Threatened upland sandpipers, Henslow's sparrow, and Bell's vireo occur on the properties. In addition to wildlife habitat protection, these properties are open for public uses such as hunting, trapping, cross-country skiing, hiking, bird watching, etc.</p> <p>Attempted to bring Koeppel property to NRB for approval to purchase. Unsuccessfully attempted to coordinate another partner to purchase property. Continued communication with other landowners we have been courting to purchase land from.</p> <p>Land Acquisition Team meetings were held quarterly to coordinate discuss land protection opportunities among partners. WDNR wildlife biologist Travis Anderson hosts meetings. The Nature Conservancy land protections specialists Rodney Walter was recruited to co-leader in 2012. The team facilitated SWGSCA partners writing letters of support for Stewardship and other grant dollars.</p> <p>SWGSCA coordinator reviewed all SWGSCA partners' Stewardship applications and rankings.</p> <p>Sherven property workday: removed fencing and posted boundaries.</p> |

1.3: Protect rare and declining species, including native plants, fish, grassland birds, mammals, prairie-dependent vertebrates and others

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| <p style="text-align: center;">MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Permanently protect, buffer, manage and restore the native communities and habitats that support those species. ▪ Identify additional locations in the project boundary supporting rare species, including those that historically supported rare species but have not been sampled in recent years. ▪ Develop a comprehensive long-term monitoring program for populations of target species that will allow the Department to evaluate progress toward protecting our priority natural communities and the species that depend on them. ▪ Provide information to landowners highlighting specific management actions that would bene-fit rare species found on or near their land. ▪ Consider restoring populations of rare species to locations where they were historically pre-sent and where habitat improvements indicate their likely long-term survival |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Accomplishments 2012</p> | <p>Two properties were purchased in 2012 (Sherven & Gnewuch) by WDNR that directly protect rare and declining grassland bird species such as Henslow’s sparrow, upland sandpiper, and Bell’s vireo (all state Threatened). Additional prairie remnants were on each parcel that will now be protected into perpetuity.</p> <p>2012 was the pilot year of the Grassland Bird Conservation Area study. This is a multi-site ecological – landscape scale research project. UW Madison and WDNR Science Services initiated this research project to monitor and analyze changes in grassland bird populations and habitat over time. SWGSCA Technical Team met at TNC in Spring of 2012 to discuss plans. SWGSCA partners helped contact landowners for permission to access land, helped collect data, and conduct training to public for citizen-based monitoring.</p> <p>Held meeting in January 2012 with Applied Ecological Services to review findings of field portion of prairie remnant research project. In 2012, a final report was accepted by SWGSCA Technical Team, and final datasets were provided to WDNR. AES produced a native plant list for each property. WDNR sent plant lists to property owners, along with a prairie plant identification guide and a letter thanking the landowner for participating in the survey and discussing opportunities to work with partners to manage prairie remnants. Research-Tech Team met December 2012 to set and initiate review of data sharing protocol. Portions of data were shared with core partners including Driftless Area Land Conservancy, USFWS and NRCS.</p> <p>UW-Madison and Wisconsin DNR continued Badger Study, which includes many sites within SWGSCA.</p> <p>SWGSCA partners assisted with Bat Festival.</p> <p>MRPHA coordinator Katie Abbott & SWGSCA Outreach Team hosted a landowner workshop in Dodgeville.</p> <p>The Nature Conservancy hosted a biofuel harvest demonstration day.</p> <p>Driftless Area Land Conservancy hosted a climate change workshop at Folklore Village.</p> |

1.4: Protect watersheds of warm-water and cold-water streams that have been designated as Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Waters and restore, protect and manage degraded (“Impaired”) streams and ri-parian corridors

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| <p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sample warm-water streams that have not been sampled in recent years to identify locations supporting rare aquatic species, including fish, reptiles and amphibians. ▪ Establish or maintain existing long-term grass cover of 20 percent or more within priority watersheds. ▪ Update stream designations and the state’s list of impaired waters by identifying waters not meeting their designated biological use. ▪ Once conditions in the watersheds of priority warm-water streams have improved to the point that water quality concerns have been addressed, consider projects to restore stream channel morphology in degraded reaches of priority streams. ▪ Monitor stream response (e.g., water quality, channel morphology, stream Index of Biotic Integrity, fish sampling) to protection and management activities. |
| <p>Accomplishments 2012</p> | <p>The Sherven and Gnewuch acquisitions both lie at the headwaters of a tributary stream that feeds into the Primrose Branch of the Sugar River, a stream that is designated as an Outstanding Resource Water. These acquisitions have permanently protected this portion of the resource and will help to maintain the Primrose Branch’s status.</p> <p>SWGSCA coordinator Maureen Rowe began initial meetings to plan for a new SWGSCA Water team with basin supervisor Andy Morton.</p> <p>Andy Morton hosted first SWGSCA Water Team meeting for 30 attendees in Barneveld. Guest speaker Dave Vetrano kicked off the “Big Umbrella Partner Talk.” The group identified initial steps needed to initiate a SWGSCA Water team (identify staff, identify suitable grants, and pursue funding).</p> <p>Held two meetings with DNR fisheries management and water staff (Dave Rowe, Jim Amrhein, Mike Sorge, Andy Morton) to identify opportunity to work toward water resource objectives. Identified watersheds and potentials funding, including the Dodge Branch of the Pecatonica River.</p> <p>DNR water staff presented at Grazing Landowner workshop to discuss Fisher and Farmers and other funding opportunities for stream restoration.</p> |

Goal 2: Develop and enhance compatible recreational opportunities such as hunting, bird-watching, trout and bass fishing, trapping, nature study, paddling, hiking, and appreciation of the area’s cultural history.

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| <p style="text-align: center;">MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide compatible recreational opportunities in the project area on lands acquired in fee, or work to secure public access on lands that are protected by easement. ▪ Enhance recreational experiences by developing educational materials that highlight stream and grassland-related points of interest on or near Department properties. ▪ Continue work through the Streambank Protection Program to increase public access to high quality fishing areas, particularly streams supporting brook trout and smallmouth bass. ▪ Work with Wisconsin Department of Transportation and utility companies to enhance recreational opportunities and minimize negative aesthetic impacts of roadway and power line corridors within the project area. ▪ Promote the Southwest Savanna Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail in southwest Wisconsin, highlighting some of the many great birding opportunities in the project area. ▪ Monitor user-ship patterns on public lands as funding allows, using tools such as onsite surveys, consultation with local units of government, and coordination with the Department of Tourism and other local recreation and sporting groups |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Accomplishments 2012</p> | <p>Two acquisitions within the Perry/Primrose BCA amounting to nearly 336 acres of public property for people to hunt, trap, nature study, and hike all within a 30 minute drive of over 250,000 people.</p> <p>A Prairie Festival held at Folklore Village celebrated the natural and cultural heritage of the Southwest Wisconsin grasslands. The festival was planned and hosted by MRPHA coordinator Katie Abbot and other SWGSCA partners. The festival included local historian Jerry Dahl, local artists, local cheese and wine tasting, and talks on all aspects of conservation in SWGSCA.</p> <p>Assisted in Iowa County Conservation School day. Established contact with key biology teachers, to begin facilitating their ability to help local students learn about the unique grasslands they live in.</p> <p>Participated with Upham Woods Public School Event and met with staff to discuss providing Grassland Tool box and program. This program would be available to thousands of children in Wisconsin public schools who attend week-long outdoor education programs at the UWEX facility.</p> |

Goal 3: Help sustain the area’s rural agricultural landscape.

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| <p style="text-align: center;">MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Department and contributing Partners will provide staff to assist farmers and help them enroll in USDA programs that provide financial and technical assistance, such as CSP, and GRP. ▪ Protect and manage lands in a manner that is compatible with surrounding agriculture. ▪ Help reduce the land investments for some farmers interested in selling or easing valuable conservation lands, while continuing to farm remaining higher production lands. ▪ Provide input to USDA, DATCP, and our state and national legislators about conservation implications of proposed changes in farm policies and programs, and to recommend actions that would benefit both conservation and local producers. ▪ In some cases use land management tools, including management agreements or cropland rental, to continue project-compatible agricultural uses on Department owned land. ▪ Work with DATCP to create brochures and other educational materials and displays highlighting the history of farming in southwest Wisconsin, and the importance of maintaining grass-based agriculture to provide habitat for fish and wildlife. ▪ Promote the establishment of a Working Lands Initiative project in this project area. ▪ Encourage efforts on the part of producers to market agricultural products that are produced in a way that is compatible with grassland conservation. ▪ Monitor agricultural trends over time so project goals and strategies are adjusted to accommodate changing land use practices. |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Accomplishments 2012</p> | <p>The landowner assistance and habitat team met in October.</p> <p>Assisted in outreach to landowners coming out of CRP (mass mailing; and Webinar hosted by FSA).</p> <p>MRPHA coordinator Katie Abbott and Farm Bill Biologist Erin Holmes hosted workshops for landowners with expiring CRP contracts.</p> <p>Facilitated monthly meetings of the SWGSCA Grazing Team.</p> <p>SWGSCA grazing team applied for GLCI grant to support the grazing broker project (awarded \$30,000). The grazing broker project also received support from the multi-state Pasture Project (funded by the Wallace Center at Winrock International). Maureen Rowe and Southwest Badger RCD executive director Angie Wright were appointed to join Pasture Project Network to represent SWGSCA; network held monthly meetings updating partners on grazing and grassland initiatives in the region.</p> <p>The grazing team held a workshop in November 2012 to educate landowners about opportunities to rent land to grazing farmers (targeting landowners with expiring CRP contracts).</p> <p>Presented SWGSCA Poster and attended Carl Frederick’s Grazing Workshop in March. The workshop featured Ryan Harr, ISU field ecologist who implements a large-scale patch burn grazing project in the Grand River Grasslands of southern Iowa and northern Missouri.</p> <p>Steve Richter & Eric Mark of TNC hosted Ryan Harr for a patchburn grazing workshop/field day in October.</p> |

Goal 4: Work with local communities to help design and locate development in places that minimize impacts on grassland, savanna and stream ecosystems, while promoting a healthy rural economy.

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| <p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work to incorporate consideration of natural resource conservation into local planning and decision-making processes. ▪ Provide local communities with technical information on key natural resources within their planning jurisdiction, and become involved in comprehensive planning wherever possible. ▪ Encourage and support local communities in their efforts to survey and assess key resources in areas that are the subject of current or future land-use planning. ▪ Assist with local efforts to promote grassland-based tourism in the project area. |
| <p>Accomplishments 2012</p> | <p>No activity to report</p> |

Goal 5: Promote appreciation of historical, cultural, and archaeological resources.

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| <p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When protection is warranted based on natural resources present, work to enrich the inherent value and public benefits of land protection where there is opportunity to encompass archaeological, cultural and historical features either on the site, or within its viewshed. ▪ Obtain information from the State Historical Society on the locations of such historic and archaeological features and consider these data in land protection planning efforts ▪ Work with state and local historical societies and local governments to create outreach materials describing important cultural, historical, and archaeological sites visible from Department properties. |
| <p>Accomplishments 2012</p> | <p>Began identifying potential partners who can facilitate future accomplishments, including the Mt. Horeb Historical Society.</p> |