



Interim Forest Management Plan

Property Identifiers

Property Name and Designation (multiple small properties can be grouped):

Parker Creek Wildlife Area (PCWA) and Parker Creek Fishery Area (PCFA); collectively referred to as Parker Creek

County(ies): **Polk**

Property Acreage: 708

Forestry Property Code(s): 4987

Master Plan Date: PCWA (under the umbrella of the Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area, WPHRA) Feasibility Study and Environmental Impact Statement Approved 25 June 1999; PCFA Management Plan approved 04 January 1988

Property Assessment (1-2 pages maximum)

Parker Creek is located in Polk County and is a mix of state Wildlife Area, Fishery Area, and federal Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA). The general landscape includes agriculture, idle grassland, boxelder dominated woodlots, small forested areas and river corridors. Pothole wetlands dot the landscape. These small wetlands, which are vital to waterfowl and other wildlife, are often the most easily drained for agriculture. The WA and WPAs are predominately comprised of native prairies, oak savannas, and wetlands. The creek, which the FA surrounds, begins with a spring and is flanked by sedges, aspen, tag alder, and pine plantations. The WA is approximately 490 acres in size and has a goal of restoring the prairies, wetlands, and oak savannas that historically occurred in WPHRA. The FA is 219 acres in size and was purchased to maintain a state-owned property for fish and wildlife habitat and provide compatible recreational uses.

Landscape and regional context

The property is at the northern edge of the Western Prairie and is inside the southern edge of the Forest Transition Ecological Landscape. This property is in the Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area and is in the Star Prairie Grassland Bird Conservation Area (BCA). It has also been identified as the Northwest Pothole Priority Area for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

Hydrology

Parker Creek Fishery Area is located within the Lower Apple River watershed, a tributary to the St. Croix River. Parker Creek is a small (2-3 cfs) Class III trout stream, which originates at a spring pond in T32N, R16W, sec. 18 and flows northward for 1.5 miles, where it joins the Apple River. The water quality of Parker Creek is excellent, but habitat conditions are fair to poor. Problems include beaver activity, lack of spawning areas, shifting sand and silt substrate, and the stream's small size. In addition, the morphology of the stream channel upstream from the town road crossing makes this portion of Parker Creek unsuitable for trout. The stream in this area is 20 to 40 feet wide, extremely shallow, and has no firm banks as it flows through a considerable wetland. The spring pond near the headwaters is approximately 0.7 acres in size and has a maximum depth of eight feet. The pond is surrounded by wetland and is accessible by stream.



Interim Forest Management Plan

Approximately 2,640 feet of the Apple River border the Fishery Area. The river in this area is 50 to 70 feet wide and could have a flow exceeding 100 cfs.

Historical Vegetation

This area is on the border of the Western Prairie and Forest Transition Ecological Landscapes. Native prairies and oak savannas dominated during high disturbance cycles. There were also areas of oak brush, oak forest, and aspen. Since all of these vegetative communities depend on periodic disturbance, it is likely that wildfires were a frequent occurrence on the landscape. This area's vegetation shows features of northern and southern Wisconsin, as would be expected due to its location in the tension zone.

Current Land Cover

The current land cover consists of agricultural land, open grass areas, native prairies, oak savannas, and scattered forest lands of northern hardwoods, aspen, oak, and woodlots often dominated by boxelder. There are also red pine plantations present on the state land. Parker Creek contains a northern sedge meadow containing common lake sedge, tussock sedge, Joe-pye weed, northern blue flag, marsh bellflower, and bluejoint grass.

History of land use and past management

Historically, this area has been used for agriculture, though not heavily for row crops. This has maintained a more open landscape character and provided surrogate grassland habitats for the imperiled grassland bird guild. PCFA was once impounded by a dam on the Apple River at Little Falls. This dam was removed in the early 1950s. PCWA receives active management through prairie and wetland restorations and maintenance through periodic prescribed burns. Land is acquired as opportunities present themselves in order to increase the grassland block size for area sensitive grassland bird species. This management also greatly benefits ring-necked pheasant, a game bird that thrives in the area. Management of pine plantations has occurred on PCFA.

Current forest types, size classes and successional stages

A total of 107 acres (15%) of Parker Creek and WPHRA is forested.

- Aspen- a total of 38 acres of the recon is typed as aspen. All the aspen is mature with age ranges from 40 to 60 years old.
- Pine Plantations – a total of 23 acres of the recon is typed as red pine plantation. The pine plantation is 50 years old.
- Northern Hardwoods – a total of 23 acres of recon is typed as northern hardwoods. This consists of combination with mature aspen, oak, maples, ash, and boxelder.
- White Pine – a total of 3 acres of recon is typed as a natural white pine stand. The white pine are approximately 93 years old.
- Oak – a total of 2 acres of recon is typed as oak. The oak are around 90 years old.
- Miscellaneous Hardwoods – a total of 18 acres of recon is typed as miscellaneous hardwood with a swamp hardwood component.

High Value Conservation Forests (HCVF) or other resources/natural community types limited in the landscape

There are none identified on this property.

Biotic Inventory status

A Rapid Ecological Assessment was completed in July, 2011. This document is available on the Department's website [http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/nhi/nhireports.asp_under DNR Publication PUB-ER-842-2011](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/nhi/nhireports.asp_under_DNR_Publication_PUB-ER-842-2011).

Deferral/consultation area designations



Interim Forest Management Plan

There is a proposed consultation site present at Parker Creek. Parker Creek Fishery Area includes a northern sedge meadow containing common lake sedge, tussock sedge, Joe-pye weed, northern blue flag, marsh bellflower, and bluejoint grass.

Rare species

Many SGCN have been documented in the study area. Refer to the Rapid Ecological Assessment that was completed in July, 2011. This document is available on the Department's website <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/nhi/nhireports.asp> under DNR Publication PUB-ER-842-2011.

Invasive species

Parker Creek has reed canary grass, buckthorn and Canada thistle, as well as invasive boxelder and prickly ash.

Soils

Soils within the Parker Creek uplands consist of Burkhardt, Chetek, Cromwell, and Menahga series. These soils consist of sandy loam to loamy sand. Slopes vary from 0% to 25% and most are well to moderately well drained.

Wetland soils are the Seelyville Muck series. These are deep, poorly drained, moderately to rapidly permeable organic soils in depression areas on outwash plains. Slopes range from 0% to 2%.

Cultural and archeological sites (including tribal sites)

Polk County Archeological and Cultural Resources map does not identify any cultural or archeological sites within the project boundaries. Projects located within Parker Creek will follow manual code procedures to avoid impacts to cultural and archeological sites.

Part 2: IFMP Components (1-2 pages maximum)

Management Objectives

The primary management objective of Parker Creek Wildlife Area is to create open vistas in order to provide habitat for grassland birds. The larger the block of grassland, the greater the benefit is to grassland birds. In addition, oak savanna mixed into the landscape where appropriate provides habitat for other birds of concern, such as the red-headed woodpecker. Intact wetlands will be protected and altered wetlands will be restored.

Parker Creek Fishery Area's goals are to provide fish and wildlife habitat. The upland will be managed to meet the goals of the landscape scale WPHRA grassland project, where the needs of the fishery resource will not be compromised. This includes phasing out the pine plantations and creating more open, oak dominated woodlands. Land management activities will use best management practices to address such issues as water quality, soil erosion, invasive species, etc.

Property Prescriptions

The property prescription based on the overall goal is to promote deforestation. The pine plantations along the river will be cut heavily (pocket openings and reduce the basal area to 60 square feet per acre for the first thinning and more for each future thinning or until final harvest) to release the advance oak regeneration and continue to promote deforestation. The remaining areas will be converted to non-forest habitats through clearcutting (except leaving all oak).



Interim Forest Management Plan

Approvals:

Regional Ecologist Date

Forester Date

Property Manager Date

Area/Team Supervisor Date