

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

Property: Sandhill-Meadow Valley Work Unit 2015

Master Plan Year: 2011

Habitat Management Areas – general habitat management objectives

MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES

- Provide hunting, trapping and wildlife viewing opportunities.
- Establish and maintain linkages between similar habitat blocks to create travel corridors for the movement of species over time.
- Protect, manage, and enhance natural communities, including the wetland complexes, for ecological values and rare species habitat needs.
- Maintain isolated islands of old white and red pine forest.
- Actively manage the aspen- and oak-dominated forests to provide habitat diversity for primary game and certain non-game species.
- Maintain and manage forested and non-forested wetlands to maximize habitat for waterfowl nesting, brood rearing, and migratory stopover.
- Maintain the primary flowages to maximize wildlife benefits; consider additional wetland enhancement projects to augment functional wetland base.
- Maintain current acreage of lowland brush (shrub-carr) wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat to a broad range of animals.
- Maintain current acreage of sedge meadow to provide habitat that supports many species.
- Maintain current open landscape condition of sedge meadow sites.
- Maintain tamarack acreage and develop older, larger diameter trees to benefit species that require this community type.
- Protect hydrology of connected wetland basins, headwater streams, seeps, and other associated hydrologic features.
- Protect water quality through protection and maintenance of wetland habitat and seeps.

**Accomplishments
2015**

Objective 1. Trapping and hunting opportunities were provided throughout both the Meadow Valley and Wood County wildlife areas via state regulated seasons. Hunting and trapping opportunities were provided on Sandhill Wildlife Area per NR 10.22. The Sandhill “Learn to Hunt Deer” was cancelled due to lack of applicants to implement the hunt in addition to the recent series of “severe winter impacts” to the deer herd it was determined to minimize the harvest.

Objective 2. No management action.

Objective 3. Remote islands of white and red pine forests areas are passively managed.

Objective 4. A total of 789 acres of timber within the general habitat management area, primarily aspen and oak were harvested. An additional 656 acres of timbers is established and will likely be harvested within the next two years. The main objective is to promote and increase the acreage and structure of early successional forests to enhance and benefit ruffed grouse, woodcock, snowshoe hares, gold-wing warblers and other species of greatest concerns (SGCN) that rely on early successional forest. Harvest activities are conducted in compliance with management prescriptions outlined in the 2011 Sandhill/Meadow Valley master plan.

Objective 5. Water level manipulations focused on the 42 primary work unit flowages. Objectives are to implement late spring draw-downs but again late season above average rainfall no actions were carried out as scheduled. Wetland prescribed burns totaling 938 acres were carried out on Meadow Valley and Wood County Wildlife Areas. Total acres burned on the Meadow Valley Flowages in partnership with the Necedah FWS was 690 and on the Wood County Impoundments 248 acres. Annual dam/dike inspections of 41 dams were conducted and necessary repairs prioritized..

Objective 6. Managed shrub-carr habitat passively.

Objective 7. Managed sedge meadow habitat passively.

Objective 8. Tamarack sites managed passively.

Objective 9. No management action.

Habitat Management Areas – ruffed grouse management objectives

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Produce optimum ruffed grouse habitat including nesting, forage and brooding environments. ▪ Provide desirable habitat for other common species. ▪ Provide high quality hunting opportunities for species such as ruffed grouse and woodcock.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<p>Objective 1. Total of 159 acres are currently established to be harvested in the ruffed grouse management area on both the Wood County Wildlife Area (97 acres) and Meadow Valley Wildlife Area (62 acres). The primary focus is regenerate early successional forest to benefit ruffed grouse, woodcock and other young forest dependent species. All current harvest activities are carried out in compliance with the general management prescriptions outlined in the 2011 Sandhill/Meadow Valley master plan.</p> <p>Objective 2. Approximately 40 miles of hunter walking trails which traverse the properties were mowed to provide access into the management areas. A total of 13 acres of forest opening are mowed on alternating years to maintain and enhance habitat for American woodcock other young forest species.</p>

Native Community Management Areas – barrens management objectives

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain, expand, and enhance the ecological function of the approximately 2,816 acres of barrens community within the management area with specific emphasis on prairie flora, especially wild lupine which is the sole food source for larvae of the Karner blue butterfly (Kbb), and two other rare butterflies. ▪ Manage for Kbb recovery objectives based on delisting goals stated in the Federal Recovery Plan and the Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). ▪ Protect and maintain animals associated with barrens habitat, with specific emphasis on invertebrates, rare birds, and reptiles. ▪ Increase connectivity between patches of barrens vegetation. ▪ Manage this type as a shifting mosaic of habitat in the context of dry forest to sand prairie.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<p>Objective 1. Approximately 84 acres of scrub oaks were mowed and herbicide treated on the Sandhill barrens. In addition, 87 acres were burned in the Einfeldt South Barrens in the Meadow Valley Barrens complex. Fire Control expended 32hrs of dozer and man hours constructing firebreaks and removing stumps in the Silver Creek Barrens complex. In the Silver Creek Barrens complex a total of 203 acre harvest thus bringing the initial development as planned to near completion .</p> <p>Objective 2. Management is guided by HCP guidelines with the primary objective of reaching Federal recovery goals.</p> <p>Objective 3. To protect invertebrates from management actions, mow-only buffers, mowing and burning</p>

	<p>restrictions are applied.</p> <p>Objective 4. No management action.</p> <p>Objective 5. No management action.</p>
--	--

Native Community Management Areas – old forest management objectives

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and maintain approximately 5,700 acres of an older forest of longer lived species to benefit forest interior wildlife species. ▪ Passively manage for forested wetland habitats. ▪ Enhance forest structural diversity and development of old forest attributes such as standing dead snags, coarse woody debris, and large diameter trees. ▪ Develop and maintain old forest habitat for scenic and aesthetic purposes. ▪ Protect water quality and hydrology.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<p>Objective 1. Old Forest management zones within the Work Unit are passively managed.</p> <p>Objective 2. Forested wetlands identified are passively managed.</p> <p>Objective 3. Timber harvest adjacent to old forest sites take consideration of the important structural features of old forest management.</p> <p>Objective 4. All management activities on the work unit follow current BMP to protect and enhance water quality and hydrology.</p> <p>Objective 5. These are all managed passively.</p>

General Recreation Management and Use

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide high quality opportunities for upland game and waterfowl hunting, and trapping. ▪ Provide high-quality wildlife viewing opportunities for a broad range of migratory and resident species, including Sandhill cranes and two high priority SGCN – whooping crane and trumpeter swans
--------------------------------------	---

Accomplishments 2015	<p>Objective 1. Opportunities for trapping and hunting provided on both the Meadow Valley and Wood County wildlife areas via state regulated seasons. Hunting and trapping opportunities were provided per NR 10.22 on Sandhill Wildlife Area. The Sandhill "Learn to Hunt Deer" had 52 participants enrolled but only 48 showed for the hunt (44 youths and 4 beginner adults). This was the first hunt following the closer of the LHD due to severe winter impacts on the deer population.</p> <p>Objective 2. Viewing opportunities throughout the work unit for the public are remarkable. Both game and non-games species are common and provide unique viewing opportunities such as whooping cranes and trumpeter swans. Three viewing towers on the Sandhill overlook the Sandhill Barrens and the Gallagher Marsh. Each tower provides an exceptional viewing opportunity to observe bison in their natural environment or to get a different perspective of marsh life. There is the 3.5 mile Swamp Buck Trail that offers other opportunities to view additional forest and wetland species.</p>
---------------------------------	--

Hunting and Trapping on Wood County and Meadow Valley Wildlife Areas

MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain optimum upland habitat for game species such as ruffed grouse, woodcock and white-tailed deer. ▪ Conduct dike maintenance and water manipulation activities to enhance emergent marsh habitats. ▪ Conduct wildlife and user surveys to meet property or statewide priority inventory needs. ▪ Maintain areas with limited vehicle access to provide remote hunting and trapping experiences.
Accomplishments 2015	<p>Objective 1. In the general habitat management area approximately a total of 1035 acres of timber, primarily aspen and oak were harvested, plus, 815 acres were established for future harvesting within the next two years. The primary objective is to promote and increase the acreage and structure of early successional forests which benefits ruffed grouse, woodcock, snowshoe hares, gold-wing warblers and other species of greatest concerns (SGCN) that rely on early successional forest. Harvest activities are conducted in compliance with management prescriptions outlined in the 2011 Sandhill/Meadow Valley master plan.</p> <p>No sales were closed out in the ruffed grouse management area on Wood County Wildlife Area but 159 acres were established in the Meadow Valley and Wood County Wildlife Areas for future cutting. The primary focus is to regenerate early successional forest to benefit ruffed grouse, woodcock and other young forest dependent species. All harvest activities were carried out in compliance with the general management prescriptions outlined in the 2011 Sandhill/Meadow Valley master plan.</p> <p>Objective 2. Draw-downs were completed on the Southeast, Northeast and Southwest Refuge pools and burned as planned. Total wetlands drawn down and burn was 790 acres.</p> <p>Objective 3. Population monitor surveys include Karner Blue butterfly flight surveys, ruffed grouse roadside and drumming surveys, waterfowl brood surveys, carnivore surveys and duck banding.</p> <p>Objective 4. All primary trails are gated to limit "off-site" travel throughout the work unit.</p>

Wildlife Observation on Wood County and Meadow Valley Wildlife Areas

MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain the 250-acre closed area on Ball Road Flowages and the 1,175-acre wildlife refuge area on Meadow Valley Flowage as resting/viewing areas for migrating waterfowl. ▪ Facilitate opportunities for wildlife viewing using the existing system of dikes to aid foot travel and public access roads for vehicle travel. ▪ Establish observation sites with interpretive signs at appropriate locations, which may be moved from time to time as habitat conditions and wildlife use change. ▪ Produce information materials to improve opportunities for wildlife observation.
Accomplishments 2015	<p>Objective 1. Both Ball Road Flowages and the Meadow Valley Flowage closed areas are clearly posted to minimize disturbance to the resting area. Ball Road and Meadow Valley Flowages were resigned new aluminum signs to last longer.</p> <p>Objective 2. Select property trails and dikes are mowed at least every other year for maintenance and to provide foot access for all users. Approximately 40 miles were mowed.</p> <p>Objective 3. No management activity</p> <p>Objective 4. Meadow Valley Wood County Brochure update is final. Sandhill brochure is completed and being printed. General viewing opportunity information is included in addition to a property wide map.</p>

Access and Trails on Wood County and Meadow Valley Wildlife Areas

Accomplishments 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain Ditchbank and South Bluff Roads on Wood County WA. ▪ Maintain dikes to secondarily provide pedestrian access for hunters and trappers. <p>Objective 1. Patched approximately 100ft. of cave-ins along the Ditchbank Rd. Graded 4 miles of Ditchbank and South Bluff roads.</p> <p>Objective 2. Mowed 34 miles of dike tops and slopes, lethal controlled 15 beaver colonies, and patched approximately,2400ft of dikes on the work unit's flowages. Resurfaced and re-sloped 1700f of the north lateral dike on Wood County Impoundment's and 2600 feet of dike were reconstructed on the west dike of the Northwest Refuge pool and rip-rapped 500ft. on the Meadow Valley Flowages.</p>
---------------------------------	---

Fisheries Management on Wood County and Meadow Valley Wildlife Areas

MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with Fisheries to evaluate the restoration potential for sustainable fisheries. If conditions and demand dictate, the Department may pursue a plan variance to implement the study findings and recommendations. ▪ Prohibit motorized boats on waters of Meadow Valley and Wood County Wildlife Areas (per NR 45.11(4)).
Accomplishments 2015	<p>Objective 1. No management activity.</p> <p>Objective 2. Maintain current signing at landing displaying this restriction per NR 45.11(4).</p>

Camping on Wood County and Meadow Valley Wildlife Areas

MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Designate dispersed camping areas that will be available by permit during the fall hunting seasons (September – December) and the spring turkey season. ▪ Provide and maintain two designated dispersed camping areas on Wood County WA: the Ball Road and Amundson Road campgrounds. ▪ Provide and maintain a maximum of nine designated dispersed camping areas on Meadow Valley WA.
Accomplishments 2015	<p>Objective 1. Maintain current signing at all campgrounds with new rule change. Meadow Valley Brochure was updated. Wood County Wildlife Area brochure update is completed and reflects the new rule changes. General viewing opportunity information is included in addition to a property wide map and recent camping rule change. All signing and maps at the campgrounds were replaced and updated.</p> <p>Objective 2. The Ball Road and Amundson Road campgrounds were mowed and vault toilets cleaned on routine basis.</p> <p>Objective 3. Meadow Valley campgrounds (9) were mowed and vault toilets were cleaned on a routine basis.</p>

Property: Sandhill Wildlife Area

Habitat Management Area

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Place special management emphasis on the Gallagher Marsh complex due to its importance as a waterfowl management site.▪ Conduct deer research with sound management implications. Projects consistent with statewide deer management priorities will rank higher.▪ Conduct other resource-related research to fully utilize the opportunities that Sandhill offers.▪ Maintain the 4,500-acre closed area (NR 10.22, NR 11.13) on the north half of Sandhill Wildlife Area to provide food and shelter for migratory and resident wildlife population.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<p>Objective 1. Continued with established voluntary avoidance area to reduce disturbance to resting waterfowl and other marsh birds during fall migration.</p> <p>Objective 2. No management activity.</p> <p>Objective 3. Continue to facilitate ongoing woodpecker and squirrel research by UW-Stevens Point undergraduates. Facilitate the upstarting of the “Time Machine” snowshoe hare and ruffed grouse research, UW Madison graduate. Currently at the time of this report there are 23 radio-tagged ruffed grouse in the project. Trapping for Porcupine and Fisher are winter operations and are currently underway.</p> <p>Objective 4. As required by master plan this closed area is clearly posted.</p>

Native Community Management Area – North Bluff Old Forest and Yellow River Old Forest

<p><i>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain as a floodplain forest reserve, an aquatic reserve and wetland protection site, and as an ecological reference area. ▪ Provide closed canopy or near closed canopy to benefit area sensitive species. ▪ Protect intact stands of bottomland forest. ▪ Provide opportunities for research and education on the highest quality native floodplain forests. ▪ Protect scenic and aesthetic qualities of the Yellow River.
<p><i>Accomplishments 2015</i></p>	<p>Objective 1. Passively managed.</p> <p>Objective 2. Passively managed.</p> <p>Objective 3. Passively managed.</p> <p>Objective 4. Passively managed.</p> <p>Objective 5. Passively managed.</p>

Special Management Area

<p style="text-align: center;">MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide areas and facilities to support operations and administration needs and provide facilities to help deliver public services. ▪ Provide educational programs that develop outdoor skills emphasizing hunting, trapping, observing and other manners of enjoying wildlife resources and the outdoors. ▪ Provide interpretive and educational services that create an appreciation for wildlife resources and their management. ▪ Provide opportunities for education consistent with the statewide conservation education plan. ▪ Partner with Necedah National Wildlife Refuge on mutually beneficial education and outreach programs.
<p style="text-align: center;">Accomplishments 2015</p>	<p>Objective 1. Maintained the headquarters, Skill Center, and dormitory and skills range to provide that necessary services to the program and visitors. Twenty four various groups held meetings at the Skill Center with over 436 individuals attending.</p> <p>Objective 2. Continue to provide unique outdoor educational services with a ½ time position. There were 9 scheduled “Calendar of Events” which 7 were held, with a total of 108 participants. Miscellaneous events include Friends of Sandhill (FOS) Open house and the Natural Resources Foundation Crane watch a total of 229 participants. OSC staff attended 22 on and off-site educational events reaching 620. Primary activities include weekend workshops, High School Independent Study and off-site presentations.</p> <p>Objective 3. Meadow Valley Brochure was updated. Wood County Wildlife Area brochure update is completed. Sandhill Wildlife Area brochure is updated. General viewing opportunity information is included in addition to a property wide map and recent camping rule changes.</p> <p>Objective 4. Sandhill’s function within the statewide educational program is still unknown.</p> <p>Objective 5. Maintain communications with the Necedah staff to partner on educational activities as they arrive.</p>

Public use management and development

<p style="text-align: center;">MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide hunting and trapping opportunities for small game, waterfowl and deer consistent with the experimental needs and educational goals of the property. ▪ As existing wildlife viewing towers become unusable, replace with universally accessible viewing structures that blend with the natural landscape, compliment local culture, and meet viewer needs. ▪ Maintain the 14-mile auto tour route referred to as the Trumpeter Trail. ▪ Maintain interpretive signs located along the trail to provide information on area wildlife, habitat management and unique features.
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain the primitive 3.5-mile Swamp Buck Hiking Trail that meanders to the tower atop North Bluff. ▪ Maintain a minimum of three observation towers and approach paths accessible from the Trumpeter Trail to improve wildlife viewing opportunities.
<p style="text-align: center;">Accomplishments 2015</p>	<p>Objective 1. Implement and maintained small game and waterfowl seasons on Sandhill. Seasons begin with the statewide seasons, are closed the weekend before the “Learn to Hunt Deer” hunt. The Sandhill “Learn to Hunt Deer” had 52 participants enrolled but only 48 showed for the hunt and (44 youths and 4 beginner adults). This was the first hunt following the closer of the LHD due to severe winter impacts on the deer population. Boundary posted on the 173 acres known as “Bowden Property” Completed all safety inspections of 3 viewing towers and deck replacement.</p> <p>Objective 2. Future project.</p> <p>Objective 3. Graded 20 miles of roads including Trumpeter Trail and mowed shoulders.</p> <p>Objective 4. No action taken.</p> <p>Objective 5. The Friends of Sandhill (FOS) assisted with laying out and constructing a new hiking trail near entrance Kiosk and Sandhill Entrance sign. FOS members have continued work on the landscape project at the Skills Center.</p>

Property: Wood County Wildlife Area

Habitat Management Area

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Maintain the current aspen acreage as the dominant cover type.▪ Manage the Ball Road Flowages and the Ditchbank Road wetlands as emergent marshes.▪ Place special management emphasis on the Ball Road Flowages and the Ditchbank Road wetlands due to their importance as waterfowl management sites.▪ Maintain the established closed area (NR 11.13) to provide resting areas for migrating waterfowl.▪ Cooperatively manage South Bluff Tamaracks with Wood County to retain a relatively intact stand of regionally important forest community.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<p>Objective 1. Although no acreage of aspen was harvested within the ruffed grouse management area on the Wood County wildlife area a total of 97 acres were established for timber sales.. The primary focus is not only to regenerate early successional forest but to maintain this important forest type. All harvest activities were carried out in compliance with the general management prescriptions outlined in the 2011 Sandhill/Meadow Valley master plan.</p> <p>Objective 2. Draw-down plan was developed but not implemented to due to extremely wet summer.</p> <p>Objective 3. Lethal control was carried out on 5 beaver colonies within the Ball Road Flowage complex to improve water manipulation.</p> <p>Objective 4. Maintained clear posting of the “closed area” within the Ball Road Flowage complex.</p> <p>Objective 5. This site is passively managed.</p>

Property: Meadow Valley Wildlife Area

Habitat Management Area

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Place special management emphasis on the Meadow Valley Flowage complex due to its importance as a waterfowl management site. ▪ Manage the Meadow Valley Flowage as an emergent marsh complex.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<p>Objective 1. Reconstructed 2,600ft. of the West dike on the Northwest Refuge pool which included leveling and re-sloping to original foot-print plus rip-rapped 55ft of this dike slope. Prepared 6,500ft of dike for reconstruction work on the Southwest Refuge pool in 2016.</p> <p>All the above management activities were conducted on the Meadow Valley Flowage complex.</p>

Native Community Management Areas – Old Forest

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and maintain an older, closed canopy or near-closed canopy forest of longer lived species, such as white pine, red pine, and oak to benefit forest interior species. ▪ Enhance forest structural diversity and development of old growth characteristics, such as large diameter trees, standing dead snags, and coarse woody debris. ▪ Protect water quality through protection and maintenance of wet areas and seeps. ▪ Maintain free flowing, naturally meandering stretch of the West Branch of Beaver Creek near Kingston and Beaver Creek near Blueberry Trail. ▪ Protect the aesthetic qualities of old forest habitat, such as large diameter trees. ▪ Protect, manage, and enhance natural communities for area sensitive and rare species habitat needs.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<p>Objective 1. Old Forest management zones within the Work Unit are passively managed.</p> <p>Objective 2. Timber harvest adjacent to old forest sites take consideration of the important structural features of old forest management.</p> <p>Objective 3. All management activities on the work unit follow current BMP to protect and enhance water quality and hydrology.</p> <p>Objective 4. These are all managed passively.</p>

	<p>Objective 5. These are all managed passively.</p> <p>Objective 6. These are all managed passively.</p>
--	---