

STRATEGIC PLAN • 2006 - 2011



prairie habitat
joint venture

*A partnership that provides solutions
for wildlife, the landscape and people*

A serene sunset over a body of water with reeds in the foreground. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange glow that reflects on the water. The foreground is filled with dark silhouettes of reeds and grasses.

our vision

Healthy prairie, parkland and boreal landscapes that support sustainable bird populations and provide ecological and economic benefits for society.

our mission

Provide leadership to achieve healthy and diverse waterfowl and other bird populations through conservation partnerships. These partnerships strive for sustainable and responsible management of the landscape taking into account social, economic and environmental factors.

the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture's achievements

Since 1986, Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (PHJV) partners have secured/influenced 3.6 million acres of wetland and associated habitats that are crucial to the lifecycle needs of waterfowl, other wetland dependant birds and a host of other species. An additional 1.8 million acres are managed under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), secured prior to 1986, for a total of 5.4 million acres of NAWMP land. The partners have also promoted agricultural land use practices, policies and program adjustments that have provided additional habitat conservation benefits across large acreages of this vast prairie, parkland and boreal region. The Joint Venture partners have delivered programs within an adaptive management framework that is influenced by ongoing evaluation and directed research projects. These experiences, combined with guidance from the NAWMP Update and a strategic analysis of future issues and opportunities, have provided the base upon which this Prairie Habitat Joint Venture strategic plan has been developed.

a picture of things to come

The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture's Strategic Plan is based on a 20 year vision for adjustments in land use practices that will ensure the conservation of habitat for waterfowl and wetland-associated migratory birds. Updates will occur at five-year intervals so that partners can adapt to changes in key factors: waterfowl populations, habitat conditions, research findings, available funding and partnership opportunities, land use policies and uptake of habitat conservation program options by land owners and users.

With waterfowl the primary focus, Joint Venture partners have also committed to conservation of all bird species and are recognized as a North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) partnership. Conservation plans have been developed for shorebirds, waterbirds and landbirds. The Joint Venture partners are establishing population and habitat goals for these bird groups and are developing the partnerships and tools necessary to meet these goals.

The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture faces many challenges and new opportunities as it moves into the next five-year planning cycle. Building on a 20 year track record of accomplishments, it recognizes that much more remains to be done.

*PHJV Partners have
secured/influenced
3.6 million acres under
NAWMP, since 1986*

*A 20 year vision
for adjustments in
land use practices*



Canada's boreal forest has the largest area of wetlands of any major ecosystem in the world



getting focused

Key focus areas include the prairie and aspen parkland regions of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Peace River parkland region of north-eastern British Columbia. The Canadian prairie pothole region has long been recognized as the single most important breeding area for continental waterfowl populations. It also provides crucial habitat for a wide array of shorebirds, waterbirds and landbirds.

The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture's focus continues to be providing habitats for the recovery and maintenance of waterfowl populations at the levels of the 1970's. Sustaining waterfowl populations through dry and wet cycles depends on the availability of healthy habitats. Over the last decade more attention has been paid to other important attributes of biodiversity including all species that live within the wetland-upland complexes in the prairie pothole region.

The western boreal forest has also been recognized for its importance in meeting NAWMP's continental goals. This has led to the region's recent inclusion in the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture. Canada's boreal forest has the largest area of wetlands of any major ecosystem in the world and sustains the highest diversity of breeding bird species of any forest region on the continent. There are 276 bird species breeding in the Canadian boreal region, which provides breeding habitat for an estimated one to three billion landbirds and 12 to 14 million waterfowl. Subject to major influences such as climate change, land uses and loss of ecosystem functions, the habitats necessary to support these populations have been altered to such an extent that some waterfowl species are in decline. The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) Canada Council announced in 2004 its intention to work collaboratively to deliver a full spectrum of bird conservation in the boreal forest.

issues and opportunities

While the last decade has seen strong advances in waterfowl science, the knowledge base for other bird groups and their habitats is in its infancy. A continuing science commitment amongst the partners is key to providing an authoritative basis for adaptive management.

Equally important has been the evolution of partnerships to tackle the challenges of conservation as well as the evolution of land use policies and market forces within North America. However, the current rate of wetland and upland habitat loss continues to be troublesome and compel conservation organizations to work together even more closely for agricultural, forestry, landscape, watershed conservation and other policies that support healthy and diverse habitats.

The prairie landscape is largely the responsibility of private landowners, making positive working relationships one of the key priorities of the Joint Venture. It must also be recognized that landowners should receive financial incentives to maintain valued ecosystem components on their land and to restore others that have been lost.

Another major focus for Joint Venture partners is the influencing of public policy development with a view to conserving habitats. Canada's national Agricultural Policy Framework is one tool that is helping to change how business is done on the farm. Governments and conservation agencies are now examining how to compensate farmers for conserving ecological goods and services. This is seen as one of the most significant potential future initiatives to promote conservation.

The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture also provides opportunities for collaboration with broader conservation and resource based communities, such as hunters and hunting associations, that have similar or overlapping goals in waterfowl and habitat conservation.

All provincial and territorial jurisdictions within the Joint Venture have embarked on developing and delivering water strategies, including wetland inventories and wetland policies. Many are initiating biodiversity strategies. The federal Species at Risk Act and the Habitat Stewardship Program also assist conservation interests and there is evidence of greater partnerships and stewardship efforts through community-based conservation actions. In addition to its own direct actions, the Joint Venture will take advantage of these opportunities to achieve bird conservation on prairie and boreal landscapes.

*Focus attention
on influencing
the development
of public policies
consistent with
conserving habitats.*



The PHJVPLAN

Successfully accomplishing the following four goals that focus on:

①

Bird Populations

②

Habitat

③

Partnerships

④

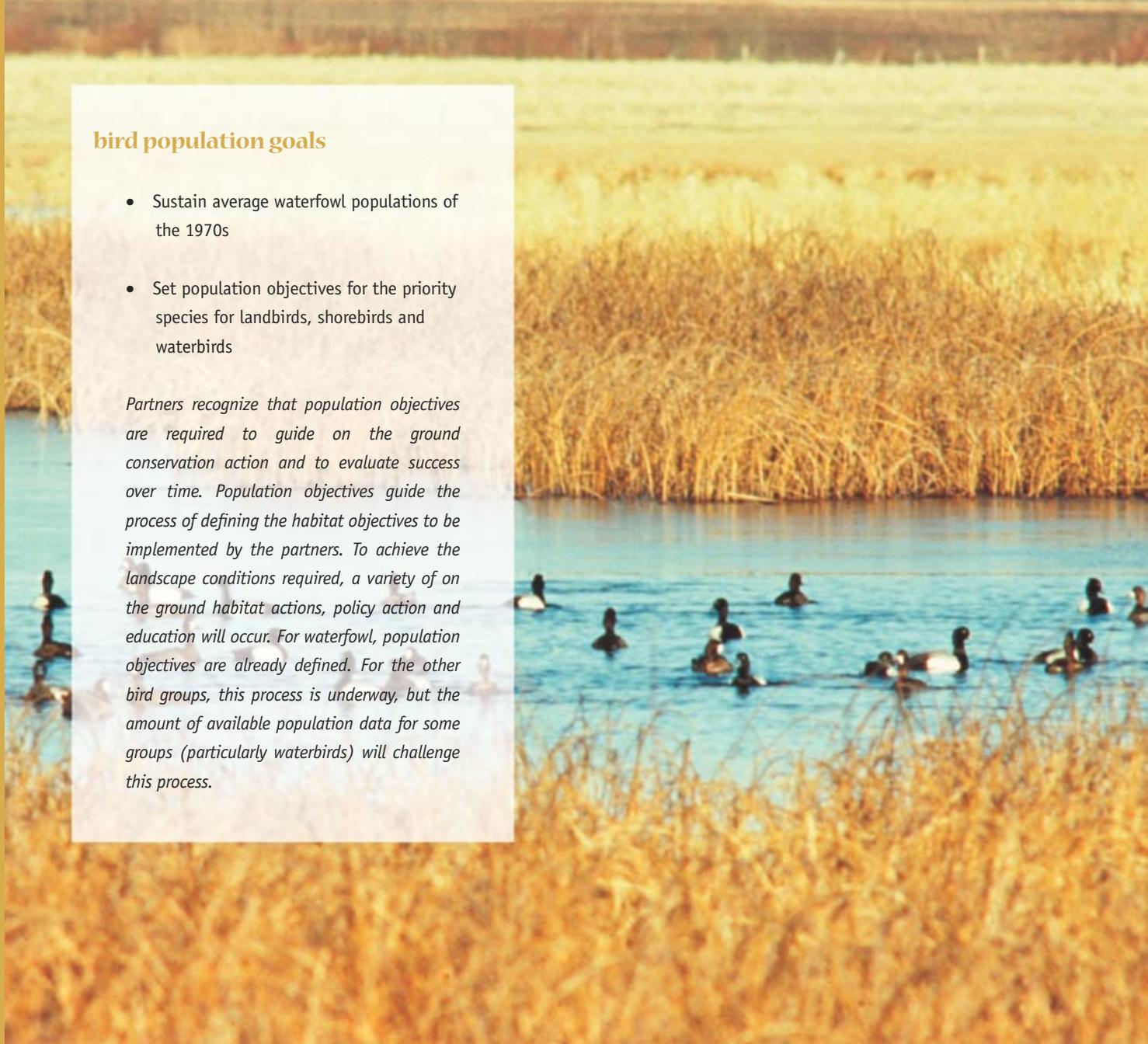
Financial/Resources



bird population goals

- Sustain average waterfowl populations of the 1970s
- Set population objectives for the priority species for landbirds, shorebirds and waterbirds

Partners recognize that population objectives are required to guide on the ground conservation action and to evaluate success over time. Population objectives guide the process of defining the habitat objectives to be implemented by the partners. To achieve the landscape conditions required, a variety of on the ground habitat actions, policy action and education will occur. For waterfowl, population objectives are already defined. For the other bird groups, this process is underway, but the amount of available population data for some groups (particularly waterbirds) will challenge this process.



habitat goals

- Stop further wetland loss
- Stop further loss of native lands, especially native grasslands
- Restore lost wetlands, especially small basins
- Restore function of upland habitats in landscapes conducive for maintenance of bird populations
- Set habitat objectives for the priority species for waterfowl, landbirds, shorebirds and waterbirds

Prairie Habitat Joint Venture partners recognize the importance of wetlands/associated uplands and grasslands as habitats needed to maintain and enhance bird populations within the Joint Venture for all four bird groups. The amount of habitat lost within the Joint Venture varies spatially and by habitat type. This will need to be taken into account as on the ground action is taken to meet habitat goals. The Joint Venture partners will be working with users of the landscape to seek and accomplish habitat solutions to meet habitat and population goals.

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partnership goals

Prairie Habitat Joint Venture membership

- Maintain an appropriate mix of engaged members
- Members respect and operate within the Charter

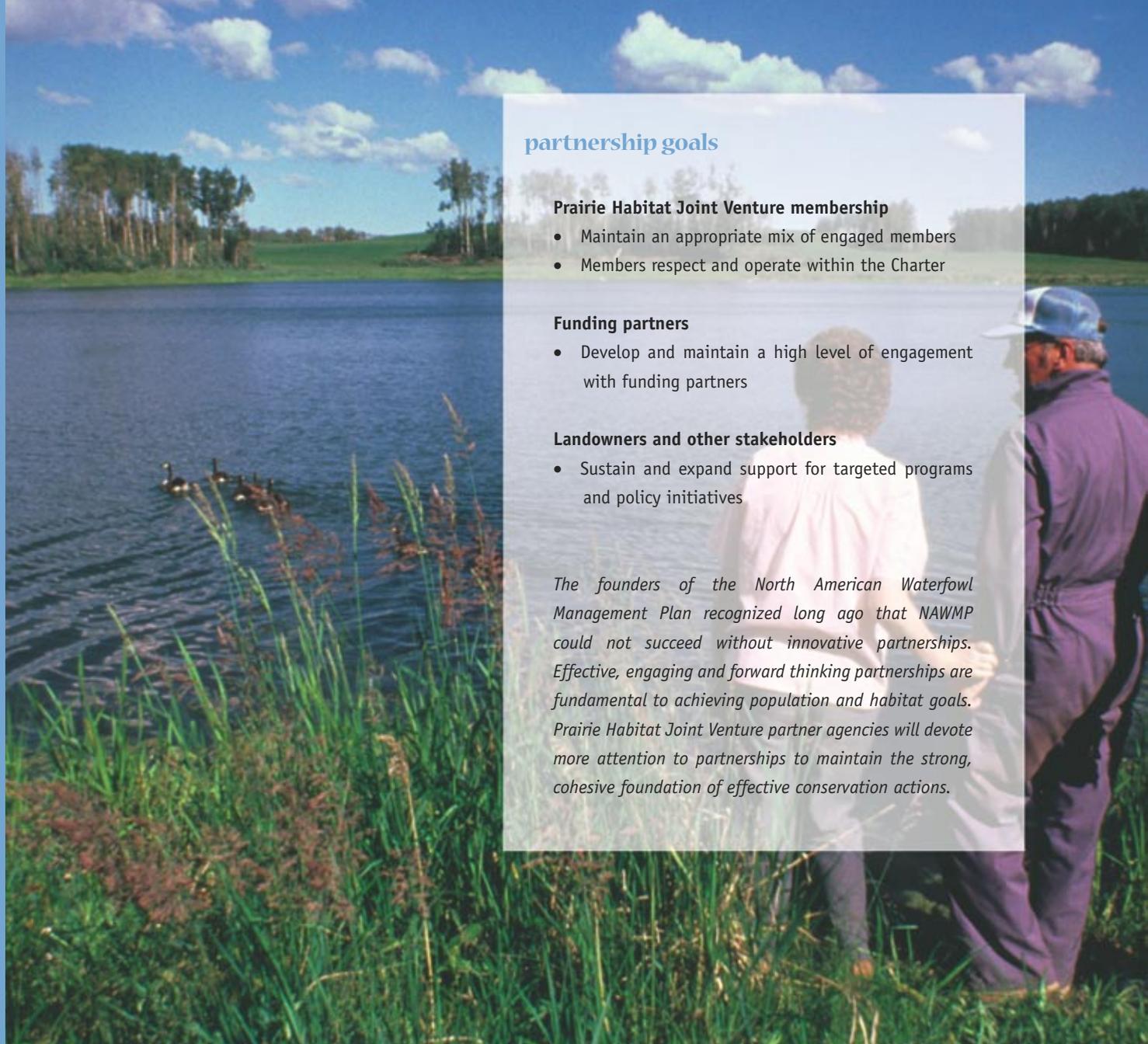
Funding partners

- Develop and maintain a high level of engagement with funding partners

Landowners and other stakeholders

- Sustain and expand support for targeted programs and policy initiatives

The founders of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan recognized long ago that NAWMP could not succeed without innovative partnerships. Effective, engaging and forward thinking partnerships are fundamental to achieving population and habitat goals. Prairie Habitat Joint Venture partner agencies will devote more attention to partnerships to maintain the strong, cohesive foundation of effective conservation actions.



financial/resource goals

- Secure, expand and diversify the funding sources
- Influence outside funding sources

The achievements of the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture have been far-reaching and significant, yet, due to funding limitations, still fall short of overall goals. Funding of the Joint Venture by many partners has been critically important and increased recognition is necessary to maintain this critical base. In order to meet all Joint Venture goals, it will be necessary to expand and diversify our funding sources and improve our influence over conservation activities outside the Joint Venture partnership.

The PHJV PLAN

Successfully accomplishing the following four goals that focus on:

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Financial/Resources



Priorities and Strategic Actions

①

Integrated Landscape Management

②

Biological Foundation

③

Policy Leadership

④

Governance of the PHJV

⑤

Marketing, Communications and Education

⑥

PHJV Capacity

integrated landscape management

Prairie Habitat Joint Venture partners strive to define and attain the landscape conditions needed to sustain bird populations at goal levels. Thus, the Joint Venture conservation programs include elements of uplands, wetlands, and riparian zones that birds and other wildlife require to fulfill their life-cycle requirements. This Integrated Landscape Management approach uses a land-use decision framework that takes into account the interactions of relevant social, economic and environmental factors. Presently, protection of native grasslands and wetlands are among the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture's highest conservation priorities.

The Joint Venture must also make its programs relevant to rural communities in order to satisfy farmers' and landowners' socioeconomic needs, and to increase participation in its programs. Flexible and diverse options, such as conservation easements, purchases, leases, tax incentives, crop-choice incentives and other landowner-friendly alternatives, creates great opportunity for program success.

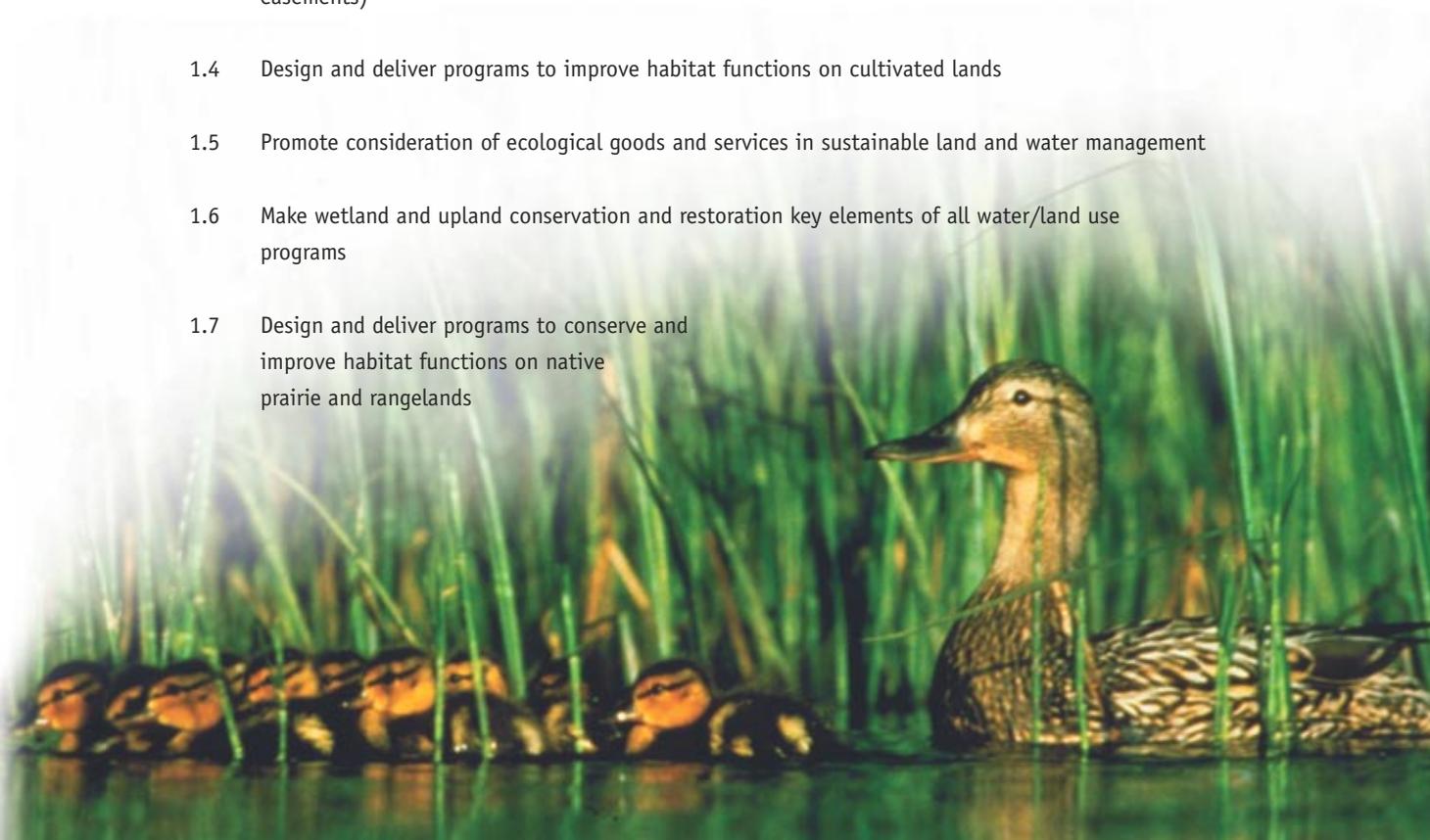
Planning and program adjustments should occur on a regular basis for two reasons:

1. Changing social and market conditions necessitate shifts in program options and emphasis
2. New information about biological and habitat assumptions, and effectiveness of different programs should alter program investments

Growing recognition of natural capital and the benefits of economic and ecological sustainability in land and water management decisions are helping the Joint Venture partners better integrate bird conservation with regional social needs.

Strategic Actions:

- 1.1 Promote and engage in integrated land and watershed management planning in prairie, parkland and boreal forest eco-regions
- 1.2 Promote good land stewardship (extension)
- 1.3 Secure, enhance and manage high risk/high biological value habitats (purchase, lease, perpetual easements)
- 1.4 Design and deliver programs to improve habitat functions on cultivated lands
- 1.5 Promote consideration of ecological goods and services in sustainable land and water management
- 1.6 Make wetland and upland conservation and restoration key elements of all water/land use programs
- 1.7 Design and deliver programs to conserve and improve habitat functions on native prairie and rangelands



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PHJV Capacity

biological foundation

Prairie Habitat Joint Venture objectives for waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, and landbirds are based on shared values, and a strong scientific foundation, and incorporate adaptive management to improve program performance in achieving goals. The Joint Venture’s vision of maintaining landscapes capable of sustaining bird populations is made tangible by developing an improved understanding of the habitats and other environmental conditions needed to sustain target populations. This requires an understanding of the linkages among populations, habitats and other environmental factors affecting birds. It encompasses the ecological understanding of factors that affect the distribution and abundance of waterfowl and other birds, and especially the linkages between landscape changes (e.g., wetland abundance, land/water use, habitat quality, and PHJV conservation actions) and demographic vital rates (e.g., recruitment, mortality and population growth rates). Such knowledge is essential for science-based population management.

Population sizes of many bird species and wetland abundance are estimated annually by ongoing federal surveys. However, information about upland habitat and land use status and trends is not being gathered regularly. As well, with the exception of several waterfowl species, estimates of avian demographic rates do not exist.

Strategic Actions:

- 2.1 Maintain, strengthen, and/or develop population, and upland, wetland and land/water use monitoring and inventory
 - Develop and maintain wetland, upland and land-use inventories (biological and physical foundation)
 - Develop and refine the inventory monitoring systems for key habitats
 - Continue to support annual population monitoring activities
 - Develop criteria for measuring and tracking accomplishments (habitat changes) achieved through policy and extension initiatives

2.2 Revise and update habitat objectives

- Prioritize habitats/geography
- Validate the recruitment model for waterfowl
- Accelerate planning and goal setting for other bird groups
- Evaluate the effects of our habitat programs on biodiversity

2.3 Establish the linkages between populations, habitat, land use and other environmental drivers

- Explore the spatial and temporal dynamics of birds
- Develop a better understanding of avian disease issues
- Develop a better understanding of avian/predator dynamics
- Improve our understanding of climate change on prairie ecosystems (agriculture, prairie wetlands, populations)

2.4 Develop objectives and strategies for species of concern

- Test response of pintails to pintail initiative
- Improve understanding of scaup/scoter populations to determine appropriate course of action
- Identify objectives and strategies for shorebirds, land birds and water birds of concern

2.5 Develop the biological and habitat foundations to guide Best Management Practices and ecological goods and services tools

2.6 Evaluate program effectiveness in creating habitat conditions that support population objectives



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PHJV Capacity

policy leadership

Canadian public policy has a significant impact on the ability of the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture to achieve its business planning goals. It is therefore very important for the Joint Venture to take a leadership role in influencing existing or emerging public policy.

Policy leadership incorporates activities that increase awareness of drivers and motivators that impact land/water use decisions and for decision making at local, regional, national and international levels.

A key component of the Joint Venture's program is to ensure that its habitat and policy interventions are achieving desired results or being modified to enhance program performance.

Strategic Actions:

- 3.1 Develop a comprehensive profile of policy, program and regulation issues and their impacts (a policy/program matrix)
- 3.2 Promote policies that support sustainable land/water use management
- 3.3 Develop a mechanism(s) to monitor, assess and provide feedback on emerging policy development that influences the work of the partners
- 3.4 Establish a better understanding of the socio-economic drivers behind loss of wetlands and native uplands to be able to halt the overall loss (socio-economic/regulatory/values motivators)
- 3.5 Increase the understanding and awareness of ecological goods and services
- 3.6 Ensure close integration between science and policy activities

governance of the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture

Stable and strong governance structures and processes are required to enable the ongoing evolution of the partnerships, targeted and adaptive conservation actions, and timely and effective communications amongst partners and clients. Such processes will also serve to enable effective decision-making respectful of the Joint Venture strategy and mandate and its role in, and contribution to, the broader North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the North American Bird Conservation Initiative.

Strategic Actions:

- 4.1 Develop and maintain the tools necessary to effectively implement the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture partnership
- 4.2 Refine the roles, responsibilities and administrative procedures for more effective implementation of the Joint Venture partnership

Priorities and Strategic Actions

①

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②

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PHJV Capacity

marketing, communications and education

The results of the investments made through the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture need to be deliberately communicated to those who have the ability to directly influence the health of the landscape and the viability of waterfowl populations, other birds and biological communities. Similarly, it is equally important to market the success of the Joint Venture in order that funding partners can appreciate how their contributions have affected or can affect conservation and ultimately to secure their long term funding and commitment. It is the breadth and strength of the partnership that provides a unique opportunity for the Joint Venture to present views on critical issues influencing the prairie and boreal landscapes.

Strategic Actions:

- 5.1 Develop and implement a communications and marketing strategy
- 5.2 Develop the key value messages, efforts and activities to be used in communications and marketing initiatives
- 5.3 Develop a summary of the PHJV's past record on influencing policy and use it to further market our impact potential and to influence others outside of the PHJV
- 5.4 Develop and market the PHJV's achievements

Prairie Habitat Joint Venture capacity

The goals within this strategy represent an ambitious agenda for the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture and require the combined capacity of all the partners. There is a heavy reliance on funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) without which the achievements of the Joint Venture would not be possible. There is also a strong reliance on the various partners to assist in many different ways from providing research and monitoring support to leading on conservation actions.

The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture must be diligent in nurturing existing partnerships and cultivating new ones, in light of the ongoing challenge for all partners to maintain their long term support (capacity).

Strategic Actions:

6.1 Develop a strategy for the PHJV to:

- Achieve the highest level of NAWCA funding and match possible
- Maintain a minimum of 70% for PHJV and 3% for WBF from NAWCA
- Explore and obtain new sources of funding for all bird conservation
- Provide sound and accurate financial reporting to partners
- Increase the profile of the PHJV to partners in Canada, United States and Mexico

6.2 Establish PHJV recognition and acknowledgement practices to:

- Maintain current and future funding sources
- Recognize external programs and initiatives that support the PHJV vision
- Maintain and restore partners' human resource capacity contributions

6.3 Investigate alternative mechanisms and sources to secure new and increased funds for all four bird initiatives and to support the work of the PHJV

Priorities and Strategic Actions

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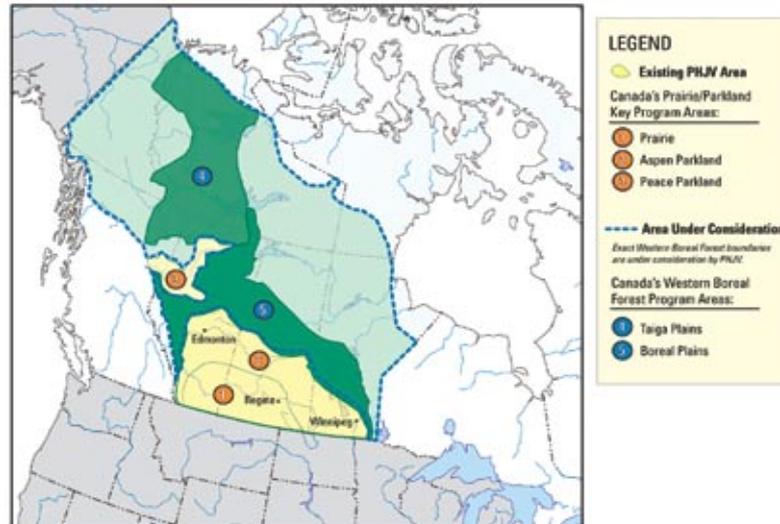
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PHJV Capacity

in closing

The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture's long term strategic plan is based on a long term vision for adjustment in land use practices that will ensure the conservation of habitat for waterfowls and wetland associated migratory birds.

The PHJV's partners look forward with great expectation to the many opportunities and enhanced partnerships that will be integral to meeting their goals.



Some photos courtesy of: Ducks Unlimited

The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (PHJV) partnership was established in the late 1980s to deliver the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) on the Canadian prairies. The partnership includes public and private agencies and organizations representing a broad range of landscape conservation interests in prairie, parkland and associated boreal forest landscapes in western Canada.

The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture Advisory Committee

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Manitoba Conservation
Manitoba Heritage Habitat Corporation
Nature Conservancy of Canada
Saskatchewan Environment
Saskatchewan Watershed Authority
Wildlife Habitat Canada





North American Waterfowl
Management Plan

Plan nord-américain de
gestion de la saugagine

Plan de Manejo de Aves
Acuáticas de Norteamérica

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