

MARCH 2022



# **Prairie Pothole**

## **JOINT VENTURE**

**2022-24 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

AN UPDATE TO THE 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN AUTHORED BY ASHLEY DAYER

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# OVERVIEW

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The PPJV Strategic Communications Plan 2022-24 is an update and continuation of the [2013-17 Strategic Communications Plan](#) prepared by Ashley Dayer. This document builds on the extensive foundation developed through the initial needs assessment and audience assessment conducted for the 2013 Plan. Content from the 2013 Plan was refined through a strategic communications survey as well as subsequent work sessions conducted throughout 2021. Directions set in this document are the result of a collaborative process by PPJV Staff, the Communications Committee, and the Management Board.

Due to a lack of capacity for communications following the development of the 2013 Plan, little progress was made towards accomplishing its goals and objectives. This was confirmed with the completion of a communications progress report in 2018. When a full-time Communications Specialist was added to PPJV staff in 2020, the Management Board expressed their interest in continuing to deliver the 2013 Plan. Accordingly, the 2013 Plan was revisited and refocused based on current priorities.

The updated plan takes a scaled-back, introductory approach with the intent of setting a strong foundation for PPJV communications. Behavioral goals and objectives as defined in the 2013 Plan will be modified and achieved across a longer time horizon outside the scope of this Update. This plan provides sideboards to operate within but will require the development of more specific communications step-down plans during implementation.

## Communications Survey

As part of the planning process, the PPJV administered a survey to the Management Board, staff, and Technical Committee in January 2021. The purpose of the survey was to develop a vision for PPJV communications and update the direction presented in the 2013 Strategic Communications Plan relating to themes, audiences, and activities. Survey results are included in Appendix A. These results were validated during a meeting with the Communications Committee in February 2021 and were referenced throughout the process of developing this updated plan.

Conclusions from the survey did not deviate significantly from the direction provided in the 2013 Plan. This update was produced by scaling down the 2013 Plan into something that could be accomplished in a 3-year time frame, based on comments from the Board. Because all original goals and objectives were adapted from the original plan (Figure 1), this update contains little new content and instead focuses on repackaging and updating existing content. Further details on many aspects of this update can be found by referencing the 2013 Plan.

**Communications Vision:** Establish a communications network of diverse voices that amplifies PPJV partners' work and galvanizes broad support for collaborative conservation to benefit people, birds, and other wildlife in the U.S. Prairie Pothole Region.

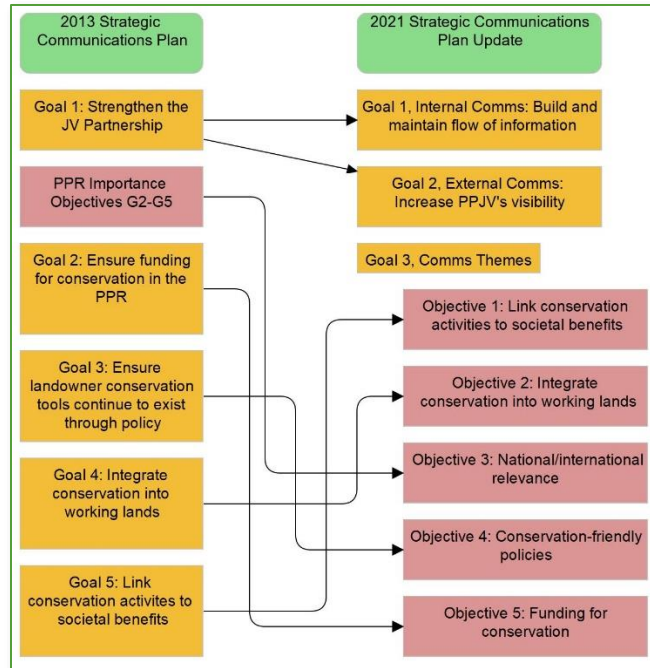


Figure 1: Comparison of communications goals from the 2013 Plan with those for the 2022 Update.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**GOAL 1: Internal Communications.** Build and maintain a robust flow of information to increase cohesion between partners and build the partnership’s internal capacity to communicate effectively.

- **Objective 1.1** – Regularly correspond with partners through internal communications while maintaining flexibility to respond to partner requests for comms support.
- **Objective 1.2** – Demonstrate the PPJV’s value to partners by providing relevant links to conservation professionals, resources, and opportunities.

**Intent:** With more capacity for communications, opportunities may come up that will help connect PPJV partners better (e.g., shared online document storage for the Management Board). Goal 1 will focus on our ability to connect internally while making room to grow and adapt over the life of this plan.

**GOAL 2: External Communications.** Increase the PPJV’s visibility as an effective, expert partnership on regional wetland and grassland habitat conservation by sharing clear, compelling, and accessible messaging on the PPJV’s mission, objectives, and accomplishments.

- **Objective 2.1:** Elevate/amplify the work of the PPJV by compiling and sharing the cumulative results of the partnership’s work.
- **Objective 2.2:** Continually improve external communication capacity by collaborating with partners’ communications staff to expand the distribution of PPJV content as well as grow PPJV and partners’ communications capacity by addressing shared goals.

**Intent:** Build the communications network to tell the big picture story of the partnership’s combined efforts more effectively, considering the oft-cited JV refrain that a collective effort has a better chance of conservation victories. The pursuit of these objectives will include repackaging and sharing partner-produced communication tools in addition to developing PPJV-produced tools. Picking up on needs identified in the 2013 Strategic Communications Plan, Goal 2 should focus on improved communications between JV and partner staff beyond seated Board members as well as expanded outreach to potential new partners.

**GOAL 3: Communications Themes.** Collaboratively advance communications on existing and emerging themes that influence conservation in the region, as identified by the PPJV’s Management Board and Committees, through the use of targeted communications.

- **Objective 3.1:** Explicitly link conservation activities to societal benefits.
- **Objective 3.2:** Demonstrate the value of working lands conservation.
- **Objective 3.3:** Demonstrate the relevance of the U.S. PPR to national and international bird conservation.
- **Objective 3.4:** Support conservation-friendly policies and policies enabling effective landowner conservation programs to exist.
- **Objective 3.5:** Highlight the importance of maintaining or increasing funding for conservation in the PPR.

**Intent:** Building on the results of Goals 1 and 2, Goal 3 provides explicit direction that will help the PPJV focus communications efforts on high priority topics. These communication themes will require the development of more specific communications campaigns along the way (view the Implementation section on page 11 for an example).

## KEY AUDIENCES

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Audiences identified in the table below are broad suggestions that will be narrowed down during implementation using step-down plans. Most audiences were pulled directly from the 2013 Plan based on feedback in the Communications Survey (Appendix A). While an extensive audience assessment was completed in 2012, this data is no longer available; what remains is provided in the 2013 Plan from page 7-11. Upon completion of this Plan, it may be necessary to prepare new audience assessments.

Regarding the ‘potential new partners’ audience, this seeks to satisfy a need identified in both the 2013 Plan and the Communications Survey. This audience may include individuals within existing partner organizations who we don’t engage with as much (e.g., regional or communications staff) or individuals at completely new organizations. There were some suggestions provided in the Communications survey, but this will ultimately be handled on a case-by-case basis during implementation.

The distinction between audiences and messengers is key, as the PPJV may not always be the most appropriate messenger. Ideal messengers will generally be those that are trusted and known by the audience. Those messengers would have a better idea of how to reach that audience, and it is critical to work with our partners to make sure we are engaging the right people and organizations.

	Goal 1: Internal Comms	Goal 2: External Comms	Goal 3: Comms Themes				
			Societal benefits	Working lands	Nat'l/int'l relevance	Policy	Funding
Board & Committees	X		X				
Current partners	X	X	X				
Potential new partners		X			X		
USDA/FSA			X		X	X	X
NRCS			X	X	X	X	X
Landowners				X			
Landowner associations				X			
State agencies				X	X	X	
USFWS				X	X	X	X
NGOs					X	X	
Refuges					X	X	
Land trusts					X	X	
Policy makers					X		X

## OVERARCHING MESSAGES

Messages to be communicated in support of each Goal were largely pulled directly from the 2013 Plan. The messages identified here provide guidelines but are just core ideas, and most of the time will not be communicated exactly as written. It is important to go beyond the messages at face value and develop more detailed content (e.g., instead of saying that a collective effort has more chance of conservation victories, demonstrate that idea through evidence and storytelling).

There are many tools and techniques to develop messages (e.g., the Message Box), but a key consideration in any exercise to produce specific messages is the audience. The more specific the audience, the more tailored a message can be. For every audience, take the time to develop a specific message that accounts for the various opportunities, messengers, and motivations that will resonate with that group.

### *GOAL 1: Internal Communications*

- Being part of a collective effort through the PPJV offers a better chance of conservation victories than working alone.
- JV staff capacity and fiscal resources are designed to support the JV partnership in science-based habitat conservation.
- The strength of the PPJV partnership comes from active participation in the Management Board, Tech Committee, and projects throughout the region.
- The Tech Committee provides support to the JV partnership regarding scientific priorities, activities, and needs.
- Active participation of all partners in updating the Implementation Plan will ensure that we have shared goals and activities moving forward, which is essential for conservation in the PPR.

### *GOAL 2: External Communications*

- A strong PPJV partnership will benefit all partners and bird and habitat conservation in the region (i.e., the PPJV benefits more than ducks).
- The PPJV is known for innovative and effective conservation science and landscape planning tools (i.e., actionable science).
- The JV is a partnership and community that works together to advance voluntary conservation efforts in the US PPR.
- **Adapt from Goals 1 & 3:** Messages for Goal 2 should focus on the broader benefits of the PPJV across the region. This will include repurposing messages from other goals through the lens of collaborating and communicating as a partnership, which was a need identified in the 2013 Plan.

### *OBJECTIVE 3.1: Societal Benefits*

- Linking conservation activities to societal benefits is a way to expand the message about the importance of conservation to a wider audience.
- Science is underway in the PPR to quantify the social benefits from conservation activities.
- Strategic and coordinated communications are necessary to present this new information to targeted audiences in the most effective manner.
- Quantification of social benefits from conservation can help justify value to decision-makers and policymakers.
- Communicating with the public about nature's values can be effective, but values must be easy to understand and acknowledge intangible benefits.

### *OBJECTIVE 3.2: Working Lands*

- Private landowners in the U.S. PPR play a critical role in conservation, with nearly 90% of the land privately owned.
- Private lands programs are win-win for landowners and wildlife / conservation programs on private lands can improve the soil, water, and wildlife resources and be value added to a producer's operation.
- Conservation programs are available to support landowners.
- By working together with landowners, agencies, and conservation organizations, we can ensure programs are desirable to landowners while benefitting birds and providing ecosystem services.
- Private landowners can make a difference in addressing the crisis in the prairies.
- Working lands conservation is a climate-smart strategy.

### Supporting ideas:

- Conservation success in the PPR hinges on developing and nurturing strong personal and working relationships with private landowners and building trust. Agencies and organizations need to consider outreach as a critical component of conservation program delivery.
- Certain landowners or landowner groups may feel more comfortable with some organization over others and therefore, it's important that organizations and agencies communicate and work together to ensure access to a wide range of landowners.
- Sharing the message that working lands can be compatible with conservation is critical to ensure that private landowners are interested and willing to implement conservation actions.
- A coordinated message from many partners can have much more impact than single messages from single organizations. Including private landowners or landowner groups in development of messages is an effective means of gaining support and interest.

### ***OBJECTIVE 3.3: National & International Relevance***

- Loss of wetlands and grasslands in the PPR has made it the most threatened breeding waterfowl habitat in the U.S.
- Loss of grasslands has made grassland birds one of the most imperiled guilds in North America
- Intensification of row-crop agricultural production and energy development in the U.S. PPR is threatening an already imperiled biome and the birds and wildlife that depend on it.
- PPR wetlands support globally significant populations of waterfowl – over 5 million duck pairs, representing over 18 species, are supported by its wetland and grassland habitat.
- Wetland and grassland loss in the PPR not only matters to landowners concerned about healthy landscapes and clean water, but also to downstream communities and throughout the flyway.

### ***OBJECTIVE 3.4: Policy***

- Private landowners in the U.S. PPR play a critical role in conservation, with nearly 90% of the land privately owned.
- Private lands programs are win-win-win for landowners, wildlife, and society.
- While quality private lands programs are available, additional resources are needed for conservation to provide landowners with an alternative to habitat conversion or alteration.

### ***OBJECTIVE 3.5: Funding***

- Federal conservation programs and policies benefit bird conservation and people in the PPR.
- These federal programs efficiently use funds, leveraging millions of dollars of matching funds.
- Each federal conservation program addresses a distinct (and complementary) component of conservation needs in the region.
- The people of the U.S. PPR – whether hunters, bird watchers, landowners, or conservation organization members – appreciate Congress’s support of these programs.
- Provisions to the Farm Bill that incentivize conservation stewardship are needed to slow the rapid and devastating conversion of habitat in the U.S. PPR.
- Partnerships are needed for effective implementation of conservation programs.
- Not all farm ground is good farm ground. Conservation programs help landowners establish practices that benefit their operation, support wildlife, and provide public health benefits.

## **ACTIVITIES**

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Prioritization of communication activities will occur during implementation. More details about each activity can be found in the 2013 Plan from page 32-40. Since this plan operates on limited audience assessment data, some experimentation is required to find the most effective activities. The activities outlined here are not just for PPJV staff, but also include the actions of partners that are informed by JV planning and science. This keys into a core idea from the 2013 Plan – “You, the partners, are the JV” – and seeks the best way to facilitate that.

The effectiveness of communications tools will also be enhanced – or hindered – by the selection of messenger. These activities will be repeated between different goals and objectives and will often benefit multiple objectives at once. It is important to track how each activity drives the use of another to identify how to capitalize on the success of one tool to get the message out.



	Goal 1: Internal Comms	Goal 2: External Comms	Goal 3: Comms Themes				
			Societal benefits	Working lands	Nat'l/int'l relevance	Policy	Funding
Tours/demos		X		X			X
Face-to-face	X	X	X	X		X	X
Website	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social media		X	X	X	X	X	X
Digital library	X						
e-News	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
JV brochure	X	X					X
Factsheets		X	X	X	X	X	X
Annual report	X	X		X	X	X	
Committees	X		X	X			X
Implementation Plan	X		X				

In addition to the common activities listed above, additional activities to consider include the following:

**GOAL 1: Internal Communications**

- Expand use of e-news contact list for short updates; build segmented lists
- Web-based tools, such as a PPR-wide event calendar
- Editorial review for partners
- Editorial calendar containing timely content; identify multi-partner campaign opportunities

**GOAL 2: External Communications**

- Strategic use of external events
- Collaborative development of messages/campaigns using creative tools
- Website expansion: regularly updated “Success Stories” or partner highlights
- Communications kits for partners to use when working with the public

**Goal 3: Communications Themes**

- The use of targeted lenses specific to each objective will help make each activity more suited: ecosystem services, benefits of grass-based agriculture, JV8, the 30x30 Initiative, CRP, etc.
- Break activities down from tactical efforts into strategic initiatives: instead of putting out a quarterly newsletter, develop an agricultural campaign organized around a newsletter.

## METRICS OF SUCCESS

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**Levels of Evaluation:**

1. **Evaluation by primary activity** measures the effectiveness of four common tools: social media, website, e-news, and annual report. These tools can communicate messages across all goals while prioritizing individual objectives as needed. Evaluating them independently of goals will ensure they meet general performance standards.

2. **Evaluation by goal & objective** will make sure we are accomplishing what we set out to do. Most of the metrics contained in this plan are output measurements; longer term outcomes are more challenging to assess and attribute to this Strategic Communications Plan and include results such as behavior change and attainment of biological goals.



3. **Evaluation by campaign:** while an evaluation plan is necessary before undertaking communications efforts, it is not feasible to define a complete evaluation plan for the next three years. This Plan sets guidelines to inform targeted communications efforts and requires the development of step-down plans along the way. Each step-down plan must have its own evaluation metrics to define what success looks like. Using this approach will enable the PPJV to maintain a sense of direction while remaining flexible to respond to priorities that may emerge during implementation, as long as they fit within the parameters of this Plan.

### *Timing of Evaluation:*

For this evaluation plan to be most successful, it must be revisited often and consistently developed into step-down plans. The key is to keep evaluation focused so that it can be managed alongside other responsibilities and lessons learned can be applied to other areas.

- Outputs will be tracked monthly and compiled quarterly
- Recommendations will be developed annually
- Communications Committee will be engaged quarterly to discuss communications outputs, results, and potential improvements

### *GOAL 1: Internal Communications*

- Solicit feedback from partners (primarily through the Management Board) regarding:
  - The most useful forms of internal communication
  - Met/unmet communication needs
  - Accessibility and effectiveness of internal PPJV communications tools
  - Recommended adjustments to enhance effectiveness of internal communications

### *GOAL 2: External Communications*

- Solicit feedback from partners (primarily through the Management Board) regarding:
  - Use of PPJV communication tools
  - Met/unmet opportunities to collaborate on communications
  - Recommended adjustments to enhance effectiveness of external communications
  - Development and delivery of communication tools produced with input from partners
- Website (via Google Analytics):
  - Number of unique visitors & percent change from previous year
  - Amount of time visitors spend on the website
  - Average number of page visits each month
  - Bounce rate
  - Visitation rates correlated to e-newsletter releases
  - Click tracker (e.g., document downloads)

- Social Media (via Facebook business analytics):
  - Social media followers and likes will increase each quarter by at least 10%
  - Each partner and each PPR state will be featured as equally as possible, within reason (some partners are more active on social media than others)
  - By 2024, total social media following will be greater than 500.
- E-News (via MailChimp reports – released at least quarterly):
  - E-news subscribers will increase each quarter, for a total increase of at least 5% annually
  - Delivery rate is 95% or higher
  - 35% of subscribers open e-newsletter within one month, increasing 5% each subsequent year the plan is implemented (unique opens; get back to 50% open rate we used to have)
  - Each article per edition will receive at least 15% of the total clicks for the edition
  - Track clicks to gauge interest in articles by topic and format
  - Average annual bounce rate will not exceed 5%
  - Each partner and each PPR state will be featured in the e-newsletter as equally as possible
  - By 2024, total newsletter subscribers will be greater than 700
- Annual Report:
  - 40% of subscribers open annual report within one month (unique clicks)
  - Track clicks/downloads on the PPJV website (Google Analytics)
  - Each partner and each PPR state will be represented in the report as equally as possible

### *GOAL 3: Communications Themes*

Evaluation for each of the five objectives under Goal 3 will depend primarily on feedback from partners as well as output metrics like those described for Goal 2. Metrics will be more useful when tied to specific campaigns developed for these objectives.

- Track distribution and performance of PPJV communications
  - **Digital Tools:** Unique visits to online resources to understand engagement with e-news articles, factsheets, social media content, reports, videos, etc.
  - **Printed Resources:** Track which partners receive copies and how many, as well as requests for additional copies.
  - **Face-to-Face and Virtual Events:** Number of participants and engagement in event (reactions, responses, etc.). If possible, distribute an evaluation tool to aid in this assessment. Note any follow-up communications from participants or spikes in visitation of other comms products (website, document downloads, newsletter subscribers, etc.).
- Solicit feedback from partners regarding use of PPJV communication tools, met/unmet opportunities to collaborate on communications, and recommended adjustments to enhance effectiveness. Key partners for each objective include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Objective 3.1: Technical Committee and Management Board
  - Objective 3.2: Management Board, especially private lands organizations
  - Objective 3.3: Management Board. Additionally, track engagement and results from national and international efforts (e.g., JV8, Central Grasslands Roadmap)
  - Objective 3.4: Policy Committee and Management Board, especially agency leaders
  - Objective 3.5: Policy Committee. Additionally, verbal debriefing of participants no more than two weeks following relevant activities, such as Hill Visits, home office meetings, field tours, or other events involving Congressional representatives, their staff, and/or agency leaders.

# IMPLEMENTATION

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Implementation of this Communications Plan requires a step-down approach to develop targeted plans for what and how to communicate as it pertains to individual objectives. The following is an example of a step-down plan that outlines the process to develop a specific communications campaign.

## Campaign: Montana CRP SAFE Outreach

**INTENT:** The purpose of this communications initiative is to raise interest and enrollment in Montana's CRP SAFE for declining grassland birds. It seeks to ensure that target audiences know about the program and understand the new incentive payments, ultimately driving more enrollment to the program. This campaign was initiated as a result of communication with partners, who requested assistance getting the word out about CRP SAFE after a year of low interest and enrollment.

### STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN OBJECTIVES:

- 2.2: Continually improve external communication capacity by collaborating with partners' communications staff.
- 3.2: Demonstrate the value of working lands conservation.
- 3.4: Support conservation-friendly policies and policies enabling effective landowner conservation programs to exist.

### CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES:

- From February to April 2022, deliver a communications campaign that reaches at least 40% of the target audience with coordinated messaging about CRP SAFE.
- During the 2022 signup period, this communications campaign will contribute to the signup for CRP SAFE, leading to over 250 acres enrolled in the program.

**IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD:** February 1<sup>st</sup> – April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022, with opportunity for an extension/continuation based on effectiveness and partner interest.

**GEOGRAPHIC EXTENT:** Counties within the project priority area north of the Missouri River.

### PRIMARY AUDIENCE: PRODUCERS

Focus specifically on ranchers with some existing CRP or cropped ground. This is different from the typical CRP audience, which tends to be more farm oriented. Address why this audience should be interested in the program. What sets this program apart from others? Primary barriers to overcome include a lack of awareness about the program and the financial benefits of enrolling. Consider the tradeoffs and emphasize the activities that they can still do on their land while in the program (e.g., grazing).

### ELEMENTS OF PRIMARY MESSAGES

- Landowners enrolled in CRP SAFE will receive an annual rental payment and other financial incentives and can still graze their lands following USDA specs (no more than 90 days once every 2-3 years) and after plantings have established (no grazing first 2-3 years).
- This program has significant benefits for grassland birds and other native wildlife. Local CRP enrollment has global significance for declining grassland birds.

- CRP SAFE provides an opportunity for producers to enroll in CRP through a non-competitive, continuous practice.
- Enrolled landowners will receive 10-15 years or annual rental payments and payments of up to 50% cost share for practice establishment (e.g., fencing, water infrastructure, etc.).
- Additional cost share assistance for native grass, forb, and shrub seedings and/or for infrastructure required to facilitate grazing may be available.
- There is potential additional cost share available from partners.
- Program details that will likely be of interest to producers:
  - Eligibility – ag lands that were cropped at least 4 out of 6 six years between 2012-2017.
  - Haying is not allowed.
  - Alfalfa and yellow sweet clover are not allowed in seed mixes.

MESSENGERS:

- Ranchers Stewardship Alliance
- USDA FSA & NRCS
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

ACTIVITIES: Collaborative development of a full communications campaign which may include the following activities, depending on consultation with key partners:

- Factsheets
- Targeted mailing to producers in focal area
- Posters
- PSAs/Radio spots
- Compelling stories for use in local newspapers and newsletters – why is this good for producers?
- Media outreach to local outlets

IMPLEMENTATION STAGES

Phase 1, Planning: Meet with planning partners to solidify timeline, objectives, and overall messages. Schedule meetings with messengers to discuss the local audience (i.e., producers), relevant activities, and distribution plans. Develop mock-up versions of activities that are expected to feature in the campaign.

Phase 2, Development: Develop suite of messaging and outputs for use in the campaign. Include several rounds of revisions to allow for input from partners and messengers. Compile necessary information to implement activities (e.g., mailing addresses, media contacts, etc.). If media outreach is involved, develop a separate implementation timeline to coordinate between all involved partners.

Phase 3, Delivery: Deliver communications campaign within timeline outlined in Phase 1. Evaluate activities in tandem with implementation and course correct if needed. After campaign has been delivered, meet with planning partners to discuss evaluation results and campaign outcomes. Plan next steps, if any.

SECONDARY AUDIENCE: PRACTITIONERS

There is the option of extending this campaign to practitioners who are in direct contact with producers. Targeted communications to practitioners would seek to ensure that they are aware of CRP SAFE for declining grassland birds and understand why they should “sell” this program to landowners. Primary barriers to overcome include a lack of guidance on how to sign up for the program and what the benefits of the program are. Specific audiences could include NRCS and FSA offices, PF Farm Bill biologists, the new PPJV science integration specialist, and/or FWP habitat specialists.

# Appendix A

## Management Board Communications Survey Report

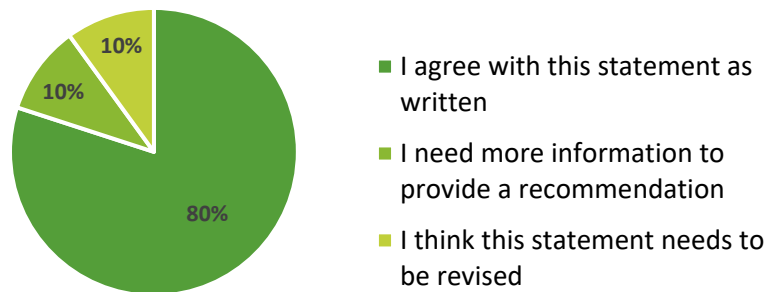
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In January 2021, an electronic survey was distributed to the Management Board and Technical Committee as part of the process to update the 2013 Strategic Communications Plan. The survey was administered via QuestionPro and focused on gathering input on broad themes and communication tactics. After a 3-week collection period, analysis was conducted with a 72% response rate. Findings of the survey, presented below, will be used to drive the development of the Strategic Communications Plan Update.

### *I. PPJV Communications Program Vision Statement*

The first question sought to gather feedback about a draft vision statement for PPJV communications. The PPJV Communications Program was previously operating without a vision statement, and the following draft was put together by PPJV staff for review through the survey: “Establish a culture of communication that amplifies our partner’s work and galvanizes broad support for collaborative conservation to benefit people and wildlife in the U.S. Prairie Pothole Region.” When asked their opinion of this statement, the majority of respondents (80%) agreed with it as written. Six respondents provided suggested language for improving the vision statement.

At the Communications Committee meeting in February 2021, attendees reviewed the revised vision statement from PPJV staff and provided additional suggestions. A final draft was produced following this discussion: “Establish a communications network of diverse voices that amplifies our partner’s work and galvanizes broad support for collaborative conservation to benefit people, birds, and other wildlife in the U.S. Prairie Pothole Region.”



**Figure 2: Respondent opinion of draft vision statement for PPJV communications.**

### *II. Communications Themes for the Next Three Years*

The second question asked respondents to choose the top five themes they thought would be important for the communications program to focus on over the next three years. Themes listed in the survey were based on content pulled from the original plan – these items were originally listed as goals, and the terminology

was adjusted for this survey to indicate a transition towards smaller, more achievable goals within the three-year lifetime of this plan.

The top five themes chosen by survey respondents, as indicated in the table below, were largely unchanged from the five highest priority goals identified in the 2013 Strategic Plan. One respondent commented that these themes are “relevant but require far more than communication to be successful.” This point was discussed and validated by the Communications Committee, who were in favor of using the ‘theme’ terminology to indicate that these are larger ideas under which to nest communications initiatives. Approaching these as broad, thematic areas allows for flexible inclusion of emerging priorities as they become important (e.g., changing administrations, JV8, etc.).

Theme	Votes	
Link conservation activities to societal benefits	17	17.53%
Integrate conservation into working lands	13	13.40%
Demonstrate the relevance of the Prairie Pothole Region to national/international bird conservation	13	13.40%
Support conservation through policy change	10	10.31%
Ensure funding for conservation	10	10.31%
Translation of scientific outputs for different audiences	9	9.28%
Build and strengthen the partnership	7	7.22%
Leverage resources across the partnership	5	5.15%
Coordinate communications about priority landscapes	5	5.15%
Improve coordination and communication between Management Board & Committees	3	3.09%
Monitor and evaluate the efforts of the JV to ensure they are effective	2	2.06%
Other	2	2.06%
Coordinate communications about bird groups and/or priority species	1	1.03%

### III. Influential Audiences – Present and Potential

The third question asked respondents to consider a list of audiences that were identified in the 2013 Strategic Communications Plan. Due to a re-examination of themes and a desire to keep the survey brief, this question was broad by necessity and did not allow for an in-depth examination of the best audience for each theme area. Respondents were asked to rank each audience on a scale from very influential (4) to non-influential (2), or don’t know (1). As shown in the table below, respondents ranked state fish and wildlife agencies, NRCS, and USFWS as the most influential audiences. The only audience that received a non-influential majority vote was LCCs, which is appropriate since most had been defunded at the time of the survey.

Audience	Weighted Mean	Majority vote
State Fish and Wildlife Agencies	3.65	Very influential (65%)
NRCS	3.6	Very influential (60%)
USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife	3.5	Very influential (50%) Moderately influential (50%)
USFWS HAPET	3.5	Very influential (50%)

		Moderately influential (50%)
Game Bird NGOs	3.45	Moderately influential (55%)
Landowners and landowner associations	3.45	Very influential (50%)
USDA / Farm Service Agency	3.37	Very influential (47%)
Policy makers / Congress	3.3	Very influential (55%)
USFWS Migratory Birds	3.3	Moderately influential (70%)
Non-game bird NGOs	3.15	Moderately influential (65%)
USFWS Refuges	3.1	Moderately influential (55%)
Hunters	3	Moderately influential (70%)
Conservation districts	2.95	Moderately influential (50%)
Citizens in the PPR	2.8	Moderately influential (40%)
Land trusts	2.55	Moderately influential (60%)
LCCs	1.85	Non-influential (75%)

Upon being presented with this data, the Communications Committee recommended being flexible in terms of audiences instead of using this list to drive audience selection. Depending on the theme or goal in question, any one of these audiences could become more or less influential. The following question on the survey, which asked about potential new audiences to target with communications, was perhaps more valuable. This question gave respondents the opportunity to reflect on typical communication audiences and suggest entities that are not currently being considered but may present a good opportunity for future communication strategies. The eight responses were grouped into categories according to common themes and listed in order of frequency, as shown below.

Corporations / market partners (e.g. Cargill, Whole Foods, Walmart, etc.)
State and local departments / elected officials (e.g. water commissions, drainage districts, highway departments)
Tourism and visitor bureaus
Research institutions or organizations
Agricultural associations
Community influencers

#### IV. *Effective Communication Tactics – Present and Potential*

The fifth question asked respondents to consider a list of communication tactics that were identified in the 2013 Strategic Communications Plan. Respondents were again asked to rank each tactic on a scale from very effective (4) to not effective (2), or don't know (1). For the same reason as that given for the previous question, this question is broad by necessity and should not be interpreted as a definitive ranking of tactic effectiveness. Just because reports and plans ranked lower on the list does not mean they will be excluded, and it remains important to select a range of communication tactics that reach a variety of audiences.

<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Majority vote</b>
Tours/Demos	3.8	Very effective (80%)
Face-to-face events/meetings	3.65	Very effective (70%)
Press releases/media relations	3.5	Very effective (55%)
Popular magazine articles	3.5	Very effective (50%) Moderately effective (50%)
E-newsletter	3.2	Moderately effective (70%)



Workshops	3.1	Moderately effective (65%)
Participation in conferences/meetings	3.1	Moderately effective (65%)
Factsheets	2.9	Moderately effective (65%)
Committee meetings/activities	2.9	Moderately effective (75%)
Landowner pocket guides	2.85	Moderately effective (45%)
PPJV website	2.8	Moderately effective (75%)
Annual report	2.55	Moderately effective (55%)
Implementation plans	2.55	Moderately effective (55%)
JV brochure	2.5	Moderately effective (55%)

The following question asked respondents to brainstorm any tactics they would like to see the communications program used in the future, as indicated in the table below. Far and away, the most popular response was social media, with six of the fourteen responses specifying that as something the JV should be doing. The Communications Committee expressed support for an increased social media presence but recommended maintaining a focus on higher profile communication venues. Taken together, these results indicate a push for the PPJV to increase its digital communications tactics, which is perhaps unsurprising considering that this survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when most work was being conducted remotely.

Social media
Magazines viewed by farmers/ranchers
Tours to degraded habitat, not just healthy habitat
Webinars
Podcasts
Landowner/producer videos
Infographics
Simple explanation of who and what JVs are

#### V. Partner Support through Communications

The last question gave respondents an open-ended opportunity to tell us directly what they would like to see from the communications program. The fourteen responses were grouped into categories according to common themes, as shown in the table below. Interestingly, these responses clustered in agreement with internal discussions about how this communications program should be structured. That is, we should maintain a focus on both internal and external communications while also taking steps to find and fill communication gaps. These responses should be considered in tandem with the communications themes (Section II) as the Strategic Communications Plan Update is developed.

<b>Coordinate &amp; Support</b>
Informing of partner activities
Coordinating press releases
Support on conservation issues where it might not be appropriate for an agency to have a voice
Coordinate messages between partners
Buy beer for social events after meetings
<b>Amplify</b>
Be a conduit for publicizing work being done by the partnership
Sensationalize organizations contributions towards achieving PPJV and continental conservation goals

Help amplify efforts to deliver NAWMP and key messages
Promoting our organization's projects as they coincide with PPJV priorities
<b>Develop</b>
Develop impactful outreach tools that influence land use that is positive for conservation
Providing PPJV-related communications 'packages'
Working lands partnership success stories that tells the entire story in an effective way, not just through one lens
Effective delivery of a few major, unifying concepts to the public at large – why wildlife, clean air and water, open space, and outdoor recreation is important and what they can do to help