

# 2017 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

## Executive Summary



Prairie  
Pothole  
Joint  
Venture



## The 2017 Prairie Pothole Joint Venture (PPJV) Implementation Plan

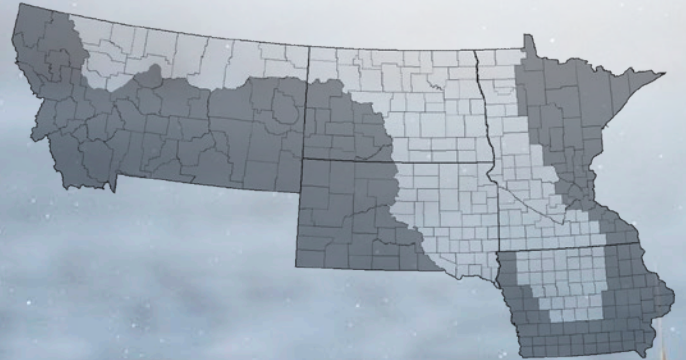
builds upon the solid foundation developed by the 2005 PPJV Implementation Plan and past strategic plans. The 2017 Plan primarily differs from past plans by selecting new priority species, including 4 upland game bird species; incorporating new diving duck models and updated dabbling duck models; emphasizing grassland bird conservation; establishing hunter retention and recruitment goals; and including state-partner developed State Tactical Plans. At the core of the PPJV success are our partners. Without committed and engaged partners working within the PPJV partnership, our conservation impact across the region would be greatly reduced.



The PPJV administrative boundaries include one-third (100,000 square miles) of North America's Prairie Pothole Region (PPR), consisting of portions of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa. Its uniqueness lies in the millions of depressional wetlands that constitute one of the richest wetland systems in the world. These "prairie potholes" and their surrounding grasslands are highly productive and support an incredible diversity of bird life. The PPR is breeding habitat for myriad wetland and grassland birds and also supports significant numbers of spring and fall migrants.

Once a vast grassland, the PPR is now an agrarian system dominated by cropland. Many wetlands have been drained or degraded, and the loss of native prairie—particularly in the eastern portion of the PPJV—has been extensive. Despite these losses, millions of wetlands and large tracts of native prairie still remain.

Consequently, the PPR is one of the most important migratory bird habitats in the Western Hemisphere. It is the backbone of North America's "duck factory," and critical habitat for many wetland- and grassland-dependent migratory birds.







Chuck Loesch

The PPR is envisioned as a place where abundant populations of wetland and grassland birds can be sustained in perpetuity for the benefit of all people who enjoy these species. Accordingly, the mission of the PPJV is to implement conservation programs through targeted conservation delivery that sustain populations of waterfowl, prairie landbirds, shorebirds, and other waterbirds at agreed upon population objective levels. The PPJV operates through partnerships that implement conservation using a mix of wetland and grassland protection, restoration, and enhancement programs.

The U.S. PPR is a dynamic place, socially as well as climatically. Nowhere is that more apparent than in rural communities, which are experiencing difficult social stresses due in large part to depopulation and changing economies. Several factors are involved, including human demography, new land uses, advances in farm equipment, new crops, and energy development. These factors affect migratory bird resources as well as human populations and economies. The PPJV recognizes these inter-relationships and believes that by

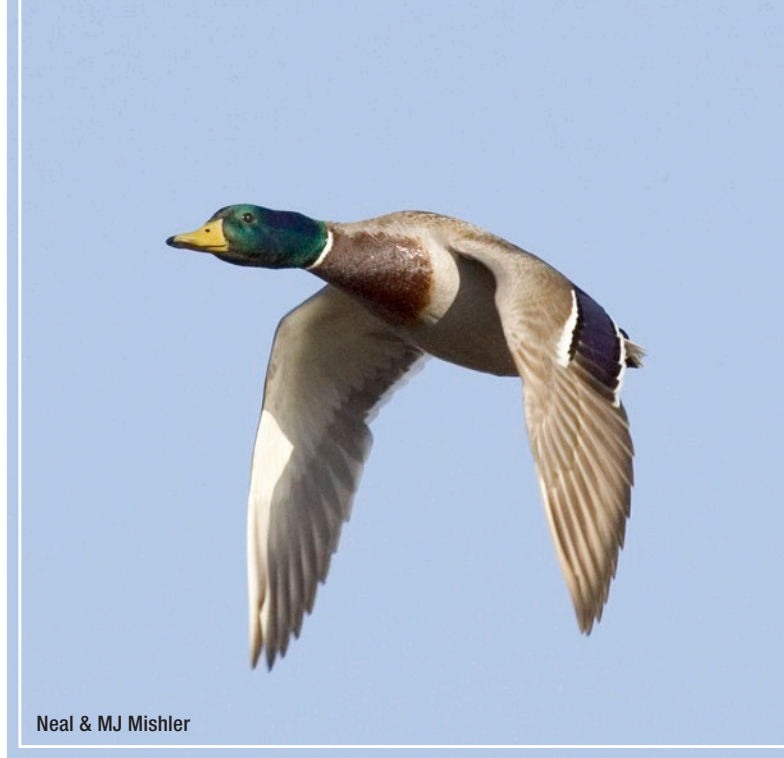
addressing factors that impact both people and birds, we can have positive impacts on both communities and avian conservation. Today, approximately 90% of the entire U.S. PPR is privately owned, most of which consists of working farms and ranches. This overwhelming private landownership underlies the need to work cooperatively with agricultural producers to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in this plan.

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This plan provides a road map for integrating the conservation of all migratory birds under a Strategic Habitat Conservation framework. The process involves stepping down the objectives of the four, international bird conservation plans for waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, and landbirds as they apply to the PPJV.



Neal & MJ Mishler




Casey Stemler

Population and habitat trends, coupled with knowledge of how species respond to landscape change, will continue to develop the biological foundation and set quantifiable goals. Priority species have been selected to represent groups of birds of special interest, including partner priorities. Conservation actions and treatments are proposed using models that depict where to implement particular conservation

actions. The resulting integrated landscape conservation design was developed by overlaying optimal habitats for priority species from each bird group. Conservation actions have been partitioned into protection, restoration, or enhancement projects for on-the-ground delivery. Monitoring and evaluation will be used to measure performance and provide feedback to improve future management performance.



A large flock of birds, likely waterfowl, is captured in flight across a vast, open landscape. The birds are scattered throughout the sky, which is a pale blue with soft, wispy clouds. Below the sky, the ground is a mix of brown, dry grass and patches of water, suggesting a wetland or marsh environment. The horizon is flat and distant. The overall scene conveys a sense of natural habitat and wildlife conservation.

The common thread that runs through each Plan section is the protection of existing wetlands, native grasslands and restored habitats.

Chuck Loesch

Currently, the four bird groups differ markedly in what is known concerning their population status, habitat requirements, and understanding of factors that most affect population change. Goals and objectives of the four bird sections reflect this diverse state of knowledge and the PPJV is making substantial progress in integrated planning. However, as we embrace the philosophy of integrated, all bird conservation, there are some important principles to bear in mind. These include:

- » The merits of separate planning but integrated action
- » The potential pitfalls of identifying geographic priorities strictly on the basis of spatial overlap
- » An awareness that managing for one species will impact the welfare of another

These concerns notwithstanding, the planning framework presented here should provide for future growth and opportunities under the paradigm of integrated all bird conservation.

The common thread that runs through each Plan section is the protection of existing wetlands, native grasslands and restored habitats. For the 5-year period covered by this plan (2017-2022), objectives for perpetual protection include 133,000 acres of priority wetland and 446,000 acres of priority grassland habitats. Term-limited conservation programs that compliment perpetual protection programs will be important to keeping these habitats available in the near future. In addition, the waterfowl plan sets a goal of restoring 36,000 wetland acres and 296,000 acres of grasslands associated with priority waterfowl populations.

Detailed step-down plans for implementing the goals and objectives identified in this Implementation Plan are provided as State Tactical Plans for each of the 5 PPJV states. The supplemental state-level plans concisely describe the priority resources and the implementation strategies to conserve those resources over the next five years. Future conservation needs are also identified in the context of research, funding, staff and public policy at the state level. Additionally, methods for monitoring and evaluating the efficacy of conservation strategies and the resulting effects on priority species are described. State Tactical Plans complement the adaptive planning framework the PPJV has embraced since its inception and provide a level of partner collaboration for leveraging resources to accomplish the overarching PPJV goals at the state level.

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This Implementation Plan has been adopted by the following members of the  
Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Management Board

Bureau of Land Management

Delta Waterfowl Foundation

Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Farm Service Agency

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and  
Parks

National Audubon Society

N/A

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Daybreak Ranch, Highmore, South Dakota

North Dakota Game and Fish Department

North Dakota Natural Resources Trust

Pheasants Forever

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish  
And Parks

The National Wildlife Refuge Association

The Nature Conservancy

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6

Ruso Ranch, Ruso, North Dakota

N/A

U.S. Geological Survey

Cover photo: Casey Stemler