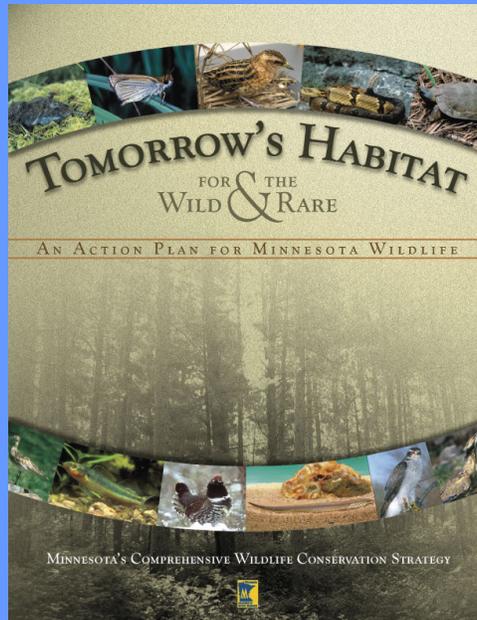


Presentation to Outdoor Heritage Council  
January 26, 2009



- In 2002, Congress established the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) program to help states fund the unmet needs of wildlife.
- In order to continue to be eligible for SWG funding, states were required to develop a comprehensive wildlife plan that considered all wildlife species and to provide a state match.
- Collectively these plans represent an historic effort to address unmet wildlife conservation needs.
- In Minnesota, over 100 individuals representing more than 40 organizations collaborated in the development of this strategic plan (organizations included TNC, Audubon, NRRI, USGS, USFWS, U of M, DNR).
- Minnesota's plan was completed in September 2005 and approved by USFWS; this plan is also referred to as the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP).
- Approval of the plan allowed MN to continue to participate in the program, which has provided MN about \$1.1 million/yr to implement the plan.
- This is not just a rare species plan or nongame wildlife plan, but a comprehensive plan that cuts across all species and habitats in the state.
- Online link to the State Wildlife Action Plan: [www.mndnr.gov/cwcs](http://www.mndnr.gov/cwcs)



## State Wildlife Action Plan

Focusing on Species  
in Greatest Conservation Need  
(SGCN) and their habitats.

- Each state developed their own definition and list of species in greatest conservation need (SGCN).
- Minnesota's definition: *Species whose populations are rare, declining, or vulnerable in Minnesota.*
- Nearly 1,200 wildlife species assessed.
- 292 (almost 25%) met the definition.
- Approximately one-half of the SGCN are state-listed species.
- One goal of the SWG program is to keep additional species from reaching listed status.
- Recovery of listed species is much more costly than addressing habitat needs before a species reaches the need for listing.

## Minnesota River Prairie

### SUBSECTION OVERVIEW

The Minnesota River Prairie is a large subsection that includes part of northwestern Iowa and spreads across southwestern Minnesota into eastern South Dakota. The Minnesota River forms a broad valley, dividing the area in half. This valley once had a continuous band of floodplain forest that extended upstream as far as Lac Qui Parle, with highly unique bedrock exposures. There are 150 lakes larger than 160 acres in the subsection, most of which are shallow. Before settlement by people of European descent, the predominant vegetation was tallgrass prairie and wetlands. Fire was once a common natural disturbance and critical to maintaining native prairie communities.

Today, row-crop agriculture is the predominant land use, and prairie remnants and floodplain forests are rare. A major concern is impacts on water quality from intensive agricultural activities, including use of fertilizers and pesticides, expanding use of pattern tiling, and ditching and draining of small wetlands. Continued loss of the small amount of native upland habitat and over-intensive grazing remain a concern.

### SPECIES IN GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED

116 Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) are known or predicted to occur within the Minnesota River Prairie. These SGCN include 52 species that are federal or state endangered, threatened, or of special concern. The table, SGCN by Taxonomic Group, displays by taxonomic group the number of SGCN that occur in the subsection, as well as the percentage of the total SGCN set represented by each taxon. For example, 10 mammal SGCN are known or predicted to occur in the Minnesota River Prairie, approximately 46% of all mammal SGCN in the state.

#### SGCN BY TAXONOMIC GROUP

Taxa	# of SGCN	Percentage of SGCN Set by Taxon	Examples of SGCN
Amphibians	1	16.7	Common snail-puppy
Birds	65	67.0	Black tern
Fish	6	12.8	Blue sucker
Insects	11	19.6	Poweshiek skipper
Mammals	10	45.5	Western harvest mouse
Mollusks	12	30.8	Fluted-shell
Reptiles	8	47.1	Five-lined skink
Spiders	3	37.5	Jumping spider ( <i>M. grata</i> )

### SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

#### Creek hellgrammite (*Leptogona compressa*)

**Distribution** Widespread but spotty distribution in the Mississippi River drainage north of St. Anthony Falls, MN, with sporadic occurrences in other MN river systems, including the Pomme de Terre and Chippewa rivers in western MN.

**Abundance** Rare. Present in low numbers in a variety of sites from SW to NE MN, but pollution and siltation of small streams and rivers have greatly reduced suitable habitat.

**Legal Status** State list-Special Concern.

**Comments** Host species include yellow perch, black crappie, slimy sculpin, and spottin shiner. Management efforts for this mussel need to include consideration of the host species.

### Quick facts

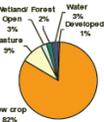
Acres: 9,331,886 (17.3% of state)

Ownership		
Public	Private	Tribal
2.8%	97.2%	0.0%

Population density (people/mi<sup>2</sup>):

Current	Change (2000-2010)
31.7	+0.5

#### Current Land Use/Land Cover



### HIGHLIGHTS

- The remaining wetlands and grasslands offer excellent habitat for bald eagles, prairie chickens, marbled godwits, upland sandpipers, Richardson's ground squirrels, regal fritillaries, swainson's hawk, Forster's terns, dickcissels, and snacket and elitoe snails.
- This is an important nesting area for prairie ducks and is also a major migratory corridor in the Mississippi Flyway.
- The Minnesota River provides habitat for paddlefish, muskels, and softshell turtles, while associated dry grasslands provide habitat for bullsnakes and western hognose snakes, and foxmarten occur in upland riparian forests.
- Areas important for SGCN include Lac qui Parle and Swan Lake WMA; Big Stone NWR; Sibley, Monson Lake, Upper Sioux Agency, and Lac qui Parle SPs; The Nature Conservancy's Chippewa Prairie, and many SNAs and WPAs.

## 25 Subsection profiles

### The subsection profiles are the heart of the State Wildlife Action Plan

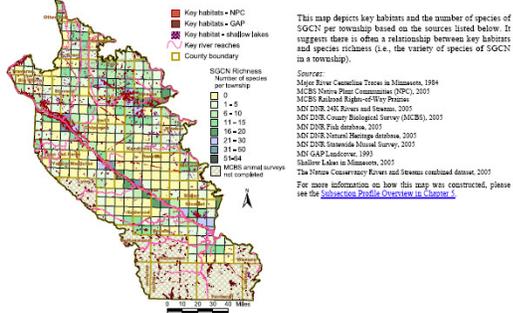
- 6 pages of rich, accessible information:
  - Overview
  - Species found in the subsections
  - Key habitats in the subsections
  - Conservation actions specific to the subsections

- Plan focuses on habitats rather than individual species.
- Plan organized around the 25 ecological subsections in the state, consistent with an ecological systems and landscape level approach.
- Analyses were conducted to determine how habitats have changes in the last 100 years and the most important or key habitats for SGCN in each subsection.
- Combining species distribution and habitat change information, the plan identified priority conservation actions within each subsection.

Key Habitats in this subsection:

- Prairie
- Non-forested wetlands
- Shallow lakes
- Rivers – Very large (Minnesota River)
- Shoreline/rock outcrops

Minnesota River Prairie  
DISTRIBUTION OF KEY HABITATS AND SPECIES RICHNESS BY TOWNSHIP



SUBSECTION HABITAT PERCENTAGES AND HABITAT USE BY SGCN TAXA

This table presents information on the percentages for each habitat in the subsection (showing changes in coverage between the mid-to late 1800s and the 1990s), as well as habitat use by SGCN taxonomic group. Habitats are listed in ranked order for percent coverage within the subsection in the 1990s. Key habitats for the subsection (as identified on previous pages) are listed in **BOLD**. SGCN habitat use is broken down by taxonomic group, with a total number of species for all taxonomic groups listed at the far right of the table.

HABITAT	Percentage of Subsection (1890s)	Percentage of Subsection (1990s)	SGCN BY TAXONOMIC GROUP							Total Number of Species
			Amphibians	Birds	Fish	Insects	Mammals	Moths	Reptiles	
Cropland	N/A	83.0		7		5		1		13
Crossland	N/A	9.0		20		1	10		6	38
Lake-Shallow	N/A	2.1		14		1			2	17
Wetland-Nonforest	13.0	1.9		34		1	2		2	41
Forest-Upland Deciduous (Hardwood)	1.5	1.6		14			4		3	21
Developed	N/A	0.8		4			3		1	8
Oak-Savanna	1.9	0.5		15			1		7	28
Lake-Deep	N/A	0.4		1		2			3	7
Forest-Lowland Deciduous	1.5	0.4		14			2		1	17
Forest-Lowland Coniferous	0.0	0.2							8	9
Forest-Upland Deciduous (Non-hardwood)	0.8	0.1		12			2			14
Prairie	77.6	0.0		19		10	10		7	49
Forest-Upland Coniferous	0.0	0.0		13					3	16
Shoreline-dunes-cliff talus	N/A	N/A		11					3	16
Savannah-Lowland	N/A	N/A		15			3		1	19
River-Headwater to Large	N/A	N/A		1		2			8	17
River-Very Large (Minnesota River)	N/A	N/A		1		1			2	16

N/A: Insufficient data available to determine percent coverage within subsection. We have no data to indicate the entrance of cropland, prairie, or developed land prior to settlement by people of European descent, although these land uses likely did occur at very low levels.  
NOTE: 0.0 indicates less than 0.05 percent coverage.

- Minnesota River Prairie Subsection key habitats: prairie, nonforested wetlands, shallow lakes, rivers, shorelines and rock outcrops.
- Many key habitats occur on SNAs, WMAs and other protected sites and are critical to maintaining and increasing populations of SGCN and other wildlife species.
- An example of a priority conservation action in this subsection is: use of fire and other management actions to maintain prairie.

## Implementation

- Prairie and savanna
- Wetlands
- Rivers and streams
- Lowland conifer forest
- Upland conifer forest
- Lake shorelands



•DNR is using the information from TH to help guide its work; six key habitats were identified (listed above).

•Focusing efforts at a systems level to affect on-the-ground benefits for SGCN and other wildlife.

Examples include:

-Restoration of the Red River Watershed – dam removals and modifications, fishways, and stream channel restoration have increased fishing opportunities and enabled the reintroduction of lake sturgeon.

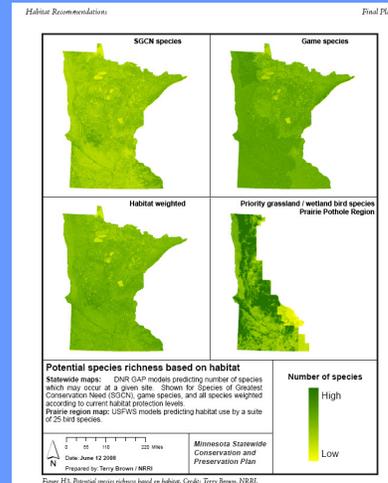
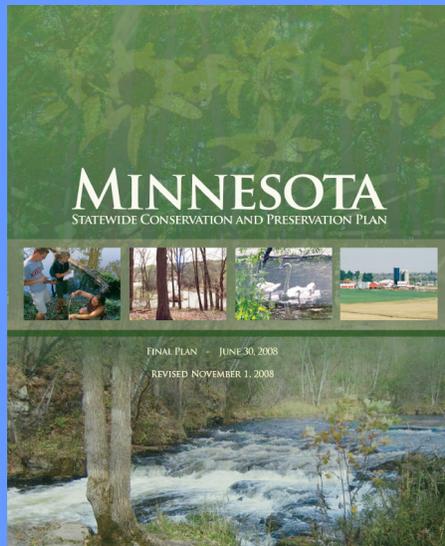
-Reconnecting prairie – in partnership with The Conservation Fund and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, DNR acquired a 218-acre Native Prairie Bank parcel to help link two parts of The Nature Conservancy’s Plover Prairie Preserve, completing a corridor of protected wildlife habitat stretching from Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge in the west to the Lac Qui Parle Wildlife Management Area in the east. The entire complex, totaling more than 42,500 acres, supports SGCN such as greater prairie chicken, marbled godwit, upland sandpiper and the poweshiek skipper, a rare butterfly.

## Protection, Enhancement and Restoration Potential FY10 - 13

Acquisition	Restoration/Enhancement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scientific and Natural Areas</li><li>- 6000 acres - \$25 M</li><li>• Native Prairie Bank Easements</li><li>- 7000 acres - \$12M</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prairie/ savanna restoration</li><li>- 25,000 acres - \$30 M</li><li>• Forest &amp; peatlands (SNA)</li><li>- 14,000 acres - \$9 M</li><li>• Stream restoration</li><li>- 21 projects - \$17 M</li></ul>

- Using the key habitat information from the Plan is one criterion the LOHC might use for prioritizing proposals.
- Focusing on protecting and restoring key habitats provides broad benefits to wildlife because it promotes biodiversity and resiliency in our ecosystems.
- Resilient and diverse ecosystems are best able to adapt to major disturbances such as climate change and invasive species.

## Links to other plans: Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan



- Info from the plan was used in the development of the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan.
- SGCN and key habitat data used by the State Conservation and Preservation Plan aquatic and terrestrial analysis groups to develop priority maps, and habitat protection recommendations.
- Map on the right shows how information from the plan was used to help develop models of where the priority grasslands are for wetland bird species in the prairie pothole region.

## Links to other plans:



- Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCNs) will have healthy and sustainable population levels.

*Strategies:*

*Habitat protection and restoration work should focus on key habitats of prairie, lowland hardwood forests and wetlands. Some of the region's distinctive species that will benefit include the:*

<i>American avocet</i>	<i>Marbled godwit</i>
<i>Dunlin</i>	<i>Semi-palmated sandpiper</i>
<i>Franklin's ground squirrel</i>	<i>Swainson's hawk</i>
<i>Lesser scaup</i>	<i>White-rumped sandpiper</i>

*Protect and establish wildlife corridors and connect existing conservation areas where possible.*

*Coordinate the habitat plans listed below to ensure maximum gains for habitat that benefits Species of Greatest Conservation Need.*

- Info from plan used at regional Campaign for Conservation workshops which resulted in specific goals for SGCN and habitats being developed at regional levels.

### Other efforts that could help the LOHC:

- Minnesota's County Biological Survey identifies sites of high and outstanding biodiversity.
- These areas often represent key habitats for SGCN and other wildlife species.

### Summary Points

- 1) The plan provides information on key habitats and priority conservation actions that can help the LOHC prioritize funding recommendations.
- 2) This is a comprehensive wildlife plan representing the collaborative efforts of a diverse cross section of conservation interests.
- 3) This plan is consistent with and provided information for the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan and the Campaign for Conservation's Fifty-Year Vision.