

## **A. Process for Addressing Habitat Restoration, Maintenance and Management**

The Program will use management plans, as defined in the glossary, to describe the appropriate restoration, maintenance, and other management activities for each parcel of land acquired for the Program. The Executive Director will draft the management plans for review and approval. The Executive Director will coordinate with the Land Advisory Committee during the drafting process to provide for early exploration of any recommendations or concerns. The Executive Director will also coordinate with the Program's Technical Advisory Committee and those carrying out aspects of the Adaptive Management Plan to explore any research or data collection needs that might be accommodated as part of the management plan. Any draft management plan submitted to the Governance Committee for approval will be accompanied by a recommendation and/or comments by the Land Advisory Committee, and any comments by the Technical Advisory Committee. Management plans must be approved by the Governance Committee.

~~An operations and maintenance management and restoration~~ plan specific to each parcel of land protected will be prepared within one year of acquisition and implemented as provided in the plan. A complex restoration and management plan will be prepared once more than one parcel is acquired toward development of a habitat complex and all operations and maintenance plans will be appended to that complex restoration and management plan. A combined restoration and management plan and operations and maintenance plan will be developed for non-complex parcels. Management plans will include all guidance prescribed in Section B, below.

## **B. Guidance for Developing Management Plans**

The ~~parcel-specific~~ management plans will describe the following:

- the existing habitats, including maps/aerial photographs;
- the amounts of each type of existing habitat and the types of habitat to be created or restored;
- management goals and objectives;
- methods for restoration, maintenance and management, including noxious weed and pest control measures;
- ~~parcel-specific~~ monitoring and research;
- the land management contractor or Sponsor's flexibility in day-to-day implementation of the management plan, contrasted with plan modifications needing Governance Committee approval;
- ~~integration of the parcel into an existing or planned habitat complex (if appropriate);~~
- access to carry out restoration, maintenance, research and monitoring where the Program does not own a parcel of Program land in fee;
- coordination and communication with the landowner or Sponsor (if any);
- an assessment of pre-existing conditions to use in evaluating potential adverse impacts on neighbors as a result of the management plan;
- public access for recreation and education;
- schedule for restoration and maintenance activities;
- budget; and
- future communications with neighboring landowners.

Unless changed through the Adaptive Management Plan, the following guidance will be used in developing ~~parcel-specific~~ management plans.

## **1. Restoration and Maintenance**

Habitat complex lands will be restored if appropriate, and maintained to benefit the target species pursuant to ~~parcel-specific~~ management plans developed based on individual features rather than strict adherence to Table 1. To the extent practical, however, the characteristics described in Table 1 will guide development of the restoration component of a parcel's management plan. Management plans for non-complex habitat lands will be developed with the purpose of achieving at least the characteristics described in Table 2. Management plans will take into account the availability of Program resources to accomplish restoration measures and to maintain conditions after restoration. Management plans will generally select methodologies from "Habitat Management Methods for Least Terns, Piping Plovers, and Whooping Cranes" developed by the July 1997 Cooperative Agreement's Habitat Criteria Subcommittee (available from the Program's Executive Director). The Adaptive Management Plan includes investigations of additional experimental management practices, including but not limited to those related to the channel. As the Governance Committee determines that any such practice is effective through the Adaptive Management Plan's phased investigations, it will identify that practice as being available, in addition to those described in Management Methods document, to select as a restoration or maintenance measure in a management plan.

## **2. Public Access**

The Program will provide public access to fee title Program lands for recreation and educational purposes, when and where it is consistent with Program objectives and land use. On Program lands where other property interests continue to be privately held, landowners may be requested, but not required, to provide similar public access. The Program may encourage agencies and organizations to provide non-Program incentives to landowners for providing such public access to Program lands that are acquired through leases or easements.

Specific guidelines for allowing public access will be established in the management plans for each parcel to describe appropriate conditions, times of the year, and uses that are consistent with the goals of the Program. Any public access to Program lands that are privately owned will be closely coordinated with and only permitted with the landowner's prior permission.

## **3. Benefits to "Other Species of Concern"**

In developing ~~parcel-specific~~ management plans, the Program will where practical select restoration, maintenance and other management measures for the target species that do not harm or may benefit other "species of concern," when such activities are consistent with the needs of the target species and are within the Program budget. An initial list of "species of concern" as related to land management is found in Appendix D. The Governance Committee may delete species from that list, or add species if they are (1) known to occur or have the potential to occur naturally in the associated habitats within the central Platte River valley; and (2) are listed by the state or federal government as endangered, threatened or candidate species; were delisted and are in an initial five-year monitoring

period; are ranked as G1, G2, or G3 by Nebraska Natural Heritage Program; or use habitat within the associated habitats in the central Platte River valley that is essential to species survival.

#### **4. Monitoring and Research on Program Lands**

All Program monitoring and research will be conducted under the Program's Integrated Monitoring and Research Plan (Program Attachment 3, Section V). The Integrated Monitoring and Research Plan's biological response (habitat and species) monitoring and research program provides: 1) integrated monitoring and research data to evaluate the effectiveness of the Program in providing habitat for target species, 2) data supporting Adaptive Management Plan decisions regarding management activities during the First Increment of the Program, and 3) scientifically defensible data that allow the determination of future milestones for the Program. The integration of monitoring and research will provide information for the Adaptive Management Plan, which may lead to adjustments in how Program lands are evaluated or managed under this Land Plan.

The Program's Integrated Monitoring and Research Plan includes monitoring of species use and conditions at the Program's managed complex and non-complex habitat areas, and in areas not managed for the Program, looking for species use preferences. The management plans for each parcel of Program land will accommodate access for data collection as appropriate under the Integrated Monitoring and Research Plan to observe the response of the target bird species and environment and other species of concern to Program activities and to track the conditions of habitats.

As part of the research effort, it is foreseen that some land and resources will be managed for research purposes, including a portion of the lands within habitat complexes and non-complex habitat lands. Non-Program lands may also be used. As parcels are acquired and/or as management plans are developed, the Executive Director, coordinating with the Land Advisory Committee and other committees advising the Governance Committee, will identify what research under the Integrated Monitoring and Research Plan might be appropriate on that parcel. Such research measures might include (1) testing Table 1 characteristics and alternative management options to those characteristics; (2) testing Table 2 characteristics; and (3) carrying out investigations of experimental management practices related to the channel. These and other monitoring and research measures are included in the Adaptive Management Plan. The Executive Director's evaluation of a parcel will take into account various factors, including the amount of time remaining in the Program increment, growing knowledge of the real estate available, and the physical characteristics of the parcel. In evaluating potential research sites on habitat complex lands, the Executive Director will identify whether it is possible to schedule the research without introducing a deliberate delay in overall completion. For example, the Executive Director might consider whether a portion of the land could be managed in a "test" configuration, allowing data to be acquired over a fixed term while restoration work is carried out on the remaining portion, with restoration then completed in the test area.

When the Executive Director identifies potential research activities on a parcel of Program land, they will be addressed in the draft management plan, reviewed by the Land Advisory Committee and other committees as assigned by the Governance Committee, and ultimately will be implemented only with Governance Committee approval. Any approved research will be carried out under the Integrated Monitoring and Research Plan as part of the Adaptive Management Plan, but must also be accommodated in the management plans adopted for the affected parcel of Program land.

Research results will be used in the Adaptive Management Plan, and may lead to adjustments in the management practices described in the Program's "Habitat Management Methods for Least Terns, Piping Plovers, and Whooping Cranes."

#### Land Plan Glossary

**Management Plan** is a term that refers to the combined restoration and management plan and associated parcel-specific operations and maintenance plans for all Program activities on or related to ~~that a habitat complex and associated parcels~~ of Program land or to a non-complex parcel. Management plans are discussed in the *Land Plan*, Section III.

**Operations and Maintenance Plan** is the parcel-specific plan for all basic property maintenance and agricultural operations activities on or related to that parcel of Program land. An operations and maintenance plan may include restoration actions as appropriate.

**Restoration and Management Plan** is a plan for all Program restoration, management, research, and monitoring activities on or related to a Program habitat complex or non-complex parcel.