

Preservation and Enhancement of Wildlife

Goal 5 To preserve and enhance wildlife

Objectives

Habitat

5.1 Improve and manage habitat to benefit at-risk and declining species and discourage invasive species.

5.2 To maintain and improve wildlife and fish habitat.

5.3 To cooperate with other agencies, conservation organizations, concerned landowners, and individuals in all appropriate aspects of wildlife, fish, and threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitat management.

Riparian Lands

5.4 To protect, manage, and improve riparian areas while implementing land and resource management activities.

5.5 To manage riparian areas in the context of the environment in which they are located, recognizing their unique values.

Animal Damage

5.6 To protect Watershed District resources from animal damage.

5.7 To protect activities taking place within the watershed and to reduce threats to human health and safety from animal damage.

Introduction

Healthy plant and animal communities provide economic and aesthetic benefits and are essential to the quality of life within the watershed. Sustaining plant and animal communities cannot be achieved by focusing on individual species or isolated areas. Rather a web of interacting relationships between plant and animal species within a given ecosystem and their relationship to the physical features and processes of their environment must be sustained to maintain the health and vigor of the system.

Current Situation

Permanent Healthy vigorous plant communities in our streams lakes and wetlands

Vegetation Resources help protect soil and substrate quality, prevent erosion, and provide sustainable cover and forage for wildlife, improve water quality, provide diverse habitat for wildlife.

Active science-based management of vegetation is essential to maintaining healthy, diverse and resilient ecosystems. Preventing degradation requires careful planning and management, takes in to consideration all resource issues for a site, and is more cost effective than correcting a problem after it has developed, especially during droughty periods. Healthy and diverse plant communities are able to withstand drought and invasive species. Well managed lakes and wetlands are less susceptible to pests as well.

Invasive Species Invasive species are a major concern in lakes, streams and wetlands. An “invasive species” is one that is introduced into an ecosystem where it is not native. Invasive plants may crowd out native plants, make areas more susceptible to catastrophic fire, degrade habitat quality for native fish and wildlife, and may harm economic, environmental or human health. For example, Eurasian water milfoil has achieved nuisance levels making recreational navigation in some lakes difficult to impossible and Reed canary grass has affected local hydrology, altered soils and affected native plants and animals.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Privately owned and other non-public lands provide habitat for much of the District’s wildlife. When people use land, they change the quantity and quality of the habitat to land provides to the wildlife and, therefore, the number and types of wildlife that can live there. The use and condition of the land affects aquatic habitat as well.

Fragmentation and loss of habitat resulting from urban and suburban development and from intensive agricultural uses have contributed to declines in populations of many terrestrial and aquatic species. Invasive species are second only to habitat destruction as the cause of native species decline.

Protecting specific ecosystems and landscapes – including wetlands, floodplains and certain riparian habitats- can help support wildlife and aquatic species and provide benefits in the form of recreation, hunting and enjoyment. Improving habitat for declining and at-risk species is key to preventing further declines and ensuring the continued survival of those species and the overall health of the ecosystems of which they are part.

Wetlands Wetlands provide wildlife habitat, can protect and improve water quality, attenuate water flows associated with flooding and recharge or discharge groundwater. Land use changes and drainage led to the alteration or loss of approximately 40% of wetlands. Increased knowledge of wetland

functions influenced State policy and moved Minnesota toward protecting wetlands.

In 1991, the State's focus was on "no net loss" of wetland acreage with the passage of the Wetland Conservation Act. However, modeling conducted by the MDNR and the Metropolitan Council and a separate analysis done by District staff for this plan indicate that with the use and resultant fall of surficial ground water levels surface water resources may be at great risk of drainage or loss due to removal of hydrology.

Strategies to Achieve the Goals Development Regulation

Evaluate the cumulative effects of proposed management activities on habitat capability for management indicators.

Mitigate the negative effects of other resource projects upon wildlife and fish habitat.

Conduct habitat examinations when proposed resource activities or uses would affect fish or wildlife habitat objectives.

Manage riparian areas in relation to various legal mandates, including, but not limited to, those associated with floodplains, wetlands, water quality, dredged and fill material, endangered species, and cultural resources.

Manage riparian areas under the principles of multiple-use and sustained-yield, while emphasizing protection and improvement of soil, water, and vegetation, particularly because of their effects upon aquatic and wildlife resources. Give preferential consideration to riparian dependent resources when conflicts among land use activities occur.

Delineate and evaluate riparian areas prior to implementing any project activity. Determine geographic boundaries of riparian areas by onsite characteristics of water, soil, and vegetation.

Avoid all adverse impacts on threatened and endangered species and their habitats, except when it is possible to compensate adverse effects totally through alternatives identified in a biological opinion rendered by the Department of Natural Resources.

When an exemption has been granted under the Endangered species act; or when the MDNR recognizes an incidental taking. Avoid adverse impacts on species proposed for listing during the conference period and while their E&T status is being determined.

Initiate consultation or conference with the MDNR Natural Heritage program when the Watershed District determines that proposed activities may have an effect on threatened or endangered species; are likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a proposed species; or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical or proposed critical habitat.

Identify and prescribe measures to prevent adverse modification or destruction of critical habitat and other habitats essential for the conservation of endangered, threatened, and proposed species. Protect individual organisms or populations from harm or harassment as appropriate.

Analyze, if impacts cannot be avoided, the significance of potential adverse effects on the population or its habitat within the area of concern and on the species as a whole.

Operations and Maintenance

Specify in watershed plans and project plans the standards, guidelines, and prescriptions needed to meet identified habitat goals and objectives for wildlife and fish, including endangered, threatened, and sensitive animal and plant species.

Carry out direct habitat improvement projects to achieve wildlife and fisheries objectives. This also may include conservation drainage, when such design approaches facilitate the hydrologic performance for that segment of ditch, provided the cost can be adequately addressed.

Mitigate the negative effects of other resource projects upon wildlife and fish habitat. This may include wetland restoration where there is a reasonable chance of the restoration succeeding and able to be sustained.

Include opportunities to accomplish fish and wildlife habitat objectives in all resource project proposals. This also may include conservation drainage, when such design approaches facilitate the hydrologic performance for that segment of ditch, provided the cost can be adequately addressed.

Delineate and evaluate riparian areas prior to implementing any project activity. Determine geographic boundaries of riparian areas by onsite characteristics of water, soil, and vegetation.

Generally rely upon a contracted expert to provide the expertise and conduct nuisance control within the Watershed District to determine property losses, and to determine methodology for animal damage management.

Use an integrated approach to the prevention of animal damage and management of animal damage control programs.

Watershed District animal damage management activities are related to the management of watershed resources. Examples of Watershed District initiated activities include, but are not limited to, removing beavers that are damaging roads.

Evaluate animal damage management needs and conduct nuisance control in cooperation with the state agencies, and landowners.

Develop and update animal damage management work plans in cooperation with interested publics.

Control damage caused by game animals and furbearers through hunting or trapping, where practicable, in cooperation and consultation with the State fish and wildlife agencies, where appropriate.

Control damage caused by nongame species within the Watershed District in close cooperation with the State fish and wildlife agencies, or other involved state or federal agencies.

Initiate consultation or conference with the MDNR Natural Heritage program when the Watershed District determines that proposed activities may have an effect on threatened or endangered species; are likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a proposed species; or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical or proposed critical habitat.

Determine whether proposed control measures conducted by the Watershed District are likely to have an effect on, threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.

Ensuring appropriate environmental analysis requirements are met for proposed non-nuisance control activities conducted by the Watershed District and ensuring consistency with Watershed plan direction.

States or other responsible agencies have the authority to control undesirable fish and aquatic animals in Watershed District waters. The Watershed District is responsible for coordinating with the responsible agencies to develop a work plan to ensure control activities are consistent with direction provided in the Comprehensive Plan. Control activities conducted by the Watershed District must meet appropriate environmental analysis requirements and be consistent with Watershed plan direction.

Develop and implement management practices to ensure that species do not become threatened or endangered because of Watershed District

actions.

Develop and implement management objectives for populations and/or habitat of sensitive species.

Place top priority on conservation and recovery of endangered, threatened, and proposed species and their habitats through relevant Watershed District, State and Private land management, and Research and Development activities and programs.

Establish, through the comprehensive planning process, objectives for habitat management and/or recovery of populations, in cooperation with the Minnesota DNR and Anoka County Parks.

Review, through the Natural Heritage Inventory, actions and programs authorized, funded, or carried out by the Watershed District to determine their potential for effect on threatened and endangered species and species proposed for listing.

**Planning,
Programming and
Budgeting**

Recognize the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of fish and wildlife as the public agency with management responsibilities for wildlife within the Coon Creek Watershed District and include them as partners in planning and implementation of activities that effect wildlife and fish.

Maintain processes for resolving habitat management issues of the Watershed District and its cooperators.

Integrate habitat planning into land management and project plans to meet Watershed, and local objectives for wildlife and fish, including threatened, and endangered and sensitive animal and plant species.

Provide a sound base of information to support management decision-making affecting wildlife and fish, including endangered, threatened, and sensitive animal and plant species, and their habitats.

Identify opportunities and management strategies to maintain and improve habitats throughout the Watershed District. This may include wetland restoration where there is a reasonable chance of the restoration succeeding and able to be sustained.

Coordinate watershed planning for wildlife and fish with State comprehensive planning.

Achieve District-wide consistency in how habitats of wildlife, fish, sensitive, and threatened and endangered species are evaluated and considered in land and resource management planning.

Specify in watershed plans and project plans the standards, guidelines, and prescriptions needed to meet identified habitat goals and objectives for wildlife and fish, including endangered, threatened, and sensitive animal and plant species.

Coordinate with other uses and activities to accomplish habitat management objectives and to reduce detrimental effects on wildlife and fisheries.

Cooperate with local, States and Federal agencies, and private groups to plan and accomplish habitat management.

Include opportunities to accomplish fish and wildlife habitat objectives in all resource project proposals.

Give attention to land along all stream channels capable of supporting riparian vegetation.

Give special attention to land and vegetation for approximately 100 feet from the edges of all perennial streams, lakes, and other bodies of water. This distance shall correspond to at least the recognizable area dominated by the riparian vegetation. Give special attention to adjacent terrestrial areas to ensure adequate protection for the riparian dependent resources.

Consider a full range of methods, including physical barriers, repellents, habitat manipulation, biological controls, silvicultural methods (for example, fertilizing to improve soil fertility), pesticides, and hunting and trapping. Use licensed hunting, fishing, and trapping as a control technique where practicable.

**Public &
Governmental
Relations**

Recognize the role of the State to manage wildlife and fish populations within their jurisdictions.

Participate with and involve other agencies, organizations, and individuals in fostering support for natural resources management within the Watershed District.

Coordinate with other uses and activities to accomplish habitat management objectives and to reduce detrimental effects on wildlife and fisheries.

Cooperate with local, States and Federal agencies, and private groups to

plan and accomplish habitat management.

Coordinate with the City and Anoka County to improve effectiveness of control program activities conducted within the Watershed District.

Inform the District Administrator and Board of Managers about animal damage management requests, management activities, and results on a timely basis.

Provide the Watershed District with technical information on recommended animal damage management tools and techniques.

Meet with responsible state agencies to cooperate where proposed nuisance control is needed to ensure coordination of Watershed District resources or activities within the Watershed District.

**Research and
Monitoring**

Use management indicators to address issues, concerns and opportunities for plants, wildlife, fish, and sensitive species habitats through all planning levels.

Monitor management indicators to evaluate compliance of management activities with plan direction, effectiveness of prescribed management, and validity of information used in habitat evaluation and planning.