

PRAIRIE WETLAND COMPLEXES

INDICATOR: Acres of prairie wetlands and grasslands protected annually

WHY IS THIS INDICATOR IMPORTANT?

Prairie wetland complexes—restored or native grasslands mixed with a range of wetland types and sizes—are important for many species, including waterfowl, shorebirds, amphibians, pheasants, and deer. Prairie wetland complexes provide great opportunities for Minnesotans to enjoy the outdoors through hunting and wildlife watching. They also provide resilient habitats in the face of global climate change. To meet wildlife needs, such complexes should be at least 4 square miles in size. At least 20 percent of the area should be in wetlands with a strong emphasis on seasonal wetlands. A minimum of 40 percent should be in grassland, with half as permanent grassland cover protected by easements or public land ownership.

We will work with public and private partners to restore and protect an additional 2 million acres of prairie wetlands and grasslands while maintaining our existing habitat base.

WHAT IS DNR DOING?

DNR programs that benefit prairie wetland complexes include enforcement, promotion of federal farm programs, and protecting and managing prairie wetland habitat through the Prairie Stewardship Program, Wildlife Management Areas, state parks, and Scientific and Natural Areas (see other specific indicators). DNR is also actively participating in and providing leadership for the Working Lands Initiative to better target conservation and agricultural programs that benefit prairie wetlands and grasslands. Local teams of public and private partners have identified target areas in 28 counties.

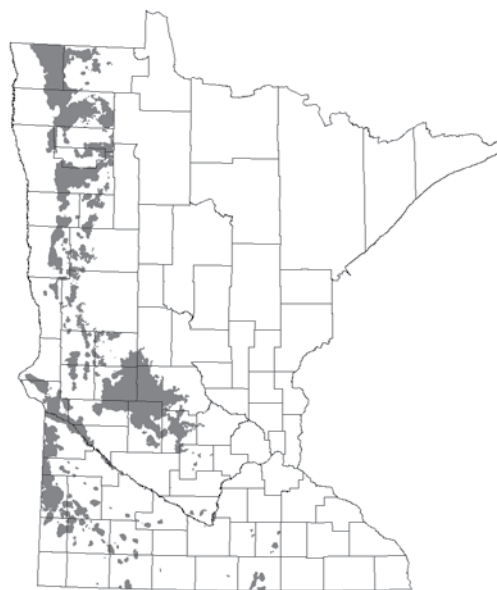
TARGET: Increase the number of high-quality prairie wetland complexes through the restoration and protection of a total of 40,000 wetland and grassland acres by all partners each year. Despite more than meeting our objectives in 2006 and 2007, the loss of Conservation Reserve Program sign ups in 2008 and 2009 have overwhelmed those gains and the acres acquired through other programs. From 2005 to 2009 there was an overall net loss of 30,000 acres.

LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- Wetlands at: www.mndnr.gov/wetlands
- Prairies at: www.mndnr.gov/prairierestoration
- Waterfowl hunting and habitat at: www.mndnr.gov/hunting/waterfowl



Prairie wetland complexes, found in the historical prairie areas of Minnesota, are valuable waterfowl habitat when they cover at least 4 square miles and include a variety of wetland and grassland types. This photo shows a cooperative Board of Water and Soil Resources/DNR restoration site.



DNR and partners are focusing efforts to conserve quality complexes that have: 1) adequate wetlands to attract 30 or more pairs of ducks per square mile, and 2) adequate grasslands under permanent protection to promote nesting success. The map shading represents areas with the best opportunities for restoring and protecting prairie wetland grassland complexes based on existing habitat.