

GRASSLAND BIRD CONSERVATION BUSINESS PLAN



Oaks and Prairies
Joint Venture



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WHAT IS A BUSINESS PLAN?

A business plan serves two broad, primary functions. First, it provides specific information to those not familiar with the proposed or existing business (e.g., prospective investors), including its goals, management strategy, financial considerations, and other resources necessary to attain those goals. Second, a business plan provides internal guidance to those actively engaged in business operations, allowing all individuals to understand the direction and path of the business. The plan helps keep the business from drifting from its goals and key actions through careful articulation of a strategy.

In the context of the Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture (OPJV) conservation efforts, a business plan represents the strategies necessary to meet the grassland bird conservation goals laid out in the OPJV Draft Grassland Bird Plan. A business plan emphasizes the type(s) and magnitude(s) of benefits that will be realized through a program, the monetary costs involved, and the potential obstacles (risks) to achieving those gains. The OPJV business plan has three core elements:

Conservation Outcomes: A concrete description of expected outcomes to which the OPJV and partners will hold ourselves accountable.

Implementation Plan with Strategic Priorities and Performance Measures: A description of the specific strategies needed to achieve our conservation outcomes and quantifiable benchmarks by which we will measure success and to make it possible to adaptively manage in the face of unexpected or unintended outcomes.

Funding and Resource Needs: An analysis of the financial, human, and organizational resources needed to carry out these strategies.

The strategies and activities discussed in this plan do not represent solely the OPJV view of the actions necessary to achieve the identified conservation goals. Rather, it reflects the consensus or majority view of the many federal, state, academic or organization experts that we consulted with during plan development.

In developing this business plan, the OPJV acknowledges other planned conservation activities that may indirectly benefit focus species. This business plan is not meant to duplicate ongoing efforts but, rather, to invest in areas where management, conservation, or funding gaps might exist in those broader conservation efforts. Hence, the aim of the business plan is to support the beneficial impacts brought about by the larger conservation community.

SUMMARY

The OPJV is a regional, self-directed partnership of government and non-governmental organizations (NGO) and individuals (see Figure 1) working across administrative boundaries to deliver landscape-level planning and science-based conservation, linking on-the-ground management with national bird population goals. The OPJV activities focus on a broad spectrum of bird conservation activities including biological planning, conservation design, conducting “on-the-ground” conservation delivery projects, organizing outreach, research, and monitoring, creating decision support tools, and raising money for these activities through partner contributions and grants within the Oaks and Prairies Bird Conservation Region (BCR) and the Edwards Plateau BCR (see Figure 2).

A major goal of the OPJV is the restoration of breeding, wintering, and resident grassland bird populations and the habitat(s) on which they depend. The OPJV is directly involved in a number of projects delivering improved grassland bird habitat through strategic conservation action. The specific focus of the *OPJV Grassland Bird Conservation Business Plan* (hereafter referred to as “the plan”) is on these delivery efforts. Of course these activities are not the only conservation efforts being undertaken by OPJV partners or the greater conservation community. However, the specific business planning consideration given here has been limited to those efforts in which the OPJV is directly involved.

The OPJV partner organizations have collaborated on the development of a set of biological objectives which are meant to provide a shared purpose to guide strategic decision-making. These objectives are lofty, explicit, and based on the best available science and population models. The ultimate goal of any OPJV strategy or activity is the improvement of bird populations at the landscape scale. This plan identifies those strategies and activities, their potential contributions towards population objectives (benefits), the probability of success (risk) the associated monetary costs, and the partner staff support and other resources needed to ensure their success.

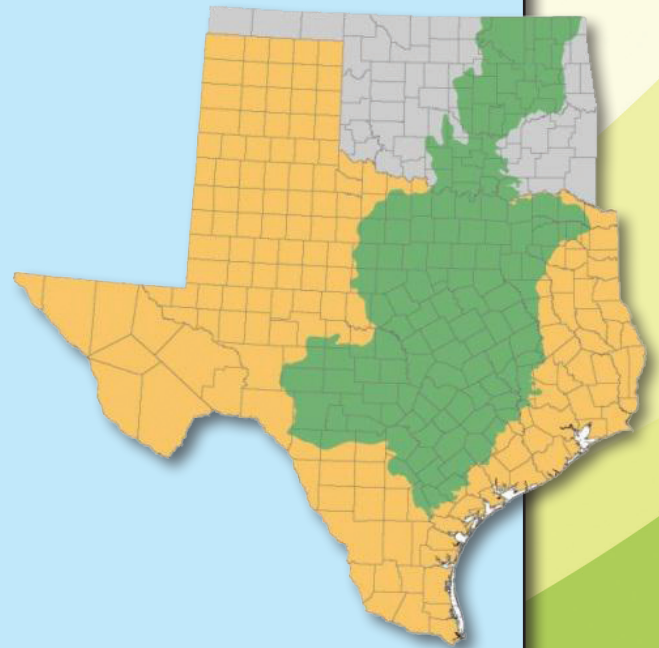


Figure 1

Like many of the southeastern and midwestern states, Texas and Oklahoma grasslands are largely (>95%) owned by private interests. As such, efforts aimed at providing habitat for grassland birds must be compatible with “working lands,” and compel private landowners to make management decisions in ways that produce beneficial results for the landowner (e.g. profits) as well as for the resources and ecosystems they manage. The activities described in the plan are grouped into four strategies which can be summarized as: providing financial incentives to private landowners; implementing a strategic communications and technical assistance effort; supporting the development of market-based solutions; and supporting locally led landowner cooperative efforts.

The OPJV is committed to “moving the needle” on grassland bird populations. Large scale, fully integrated, partnerships and programs delivered strategically and effectively will be key to success. This plan offers a road map for such an effort.



CONSERVATION NEED

Over the past century no other group of birds in North America has shown a greater and more consistent decline than those associated with grassland and shrub/savannah habitats (Samson and Knopf 1994, North American Bird Conservation Initiative, U.S. Committee 2009). According to the Breeding Bird Survey, Northern Bobwhites have declined precipitously since 1966 with an 89% decline in the Oaks and Prairies BCR, with many other grassland birds showing similar declines including Loggerhead Shrike (92%), Eastern Meadowlark (74%), Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (52%), Painted Bunting (32%), and Dickcissel (29%). To an even more drastic extent, the Greater Prairie Chicken and Attwater's Prairie Chicken, that once occupied much of this region, have been completely extirpated from vast tracts of land where they were once abundant.



There is a long list of factors often blamed for the decline in grassland bird populations, including predators, fire ants, and feral hogs. However, the fundamental cause of population declines has been a landscape-level loss of quantity and quality of suitable habitat. Recent severe drought in the region has exacerbated habitat loss effects. In the OPJV BCR grassland habitat degradation has come in the form of woody shrub encroachment and the decline in native warm-season herbaceous plant community diversity and abundance. Habitat degradation has been driven by

livestock overgrazing, exotic/invasive grass planting, "weed control" (spraying of beneficial native forbs with herbicide), fire suppression, and conversion to cropland. The OPJV partner efforts and the actions proposed through this plan are designed to address these specific causes of habitat decline by implementation of strategies identified herein.

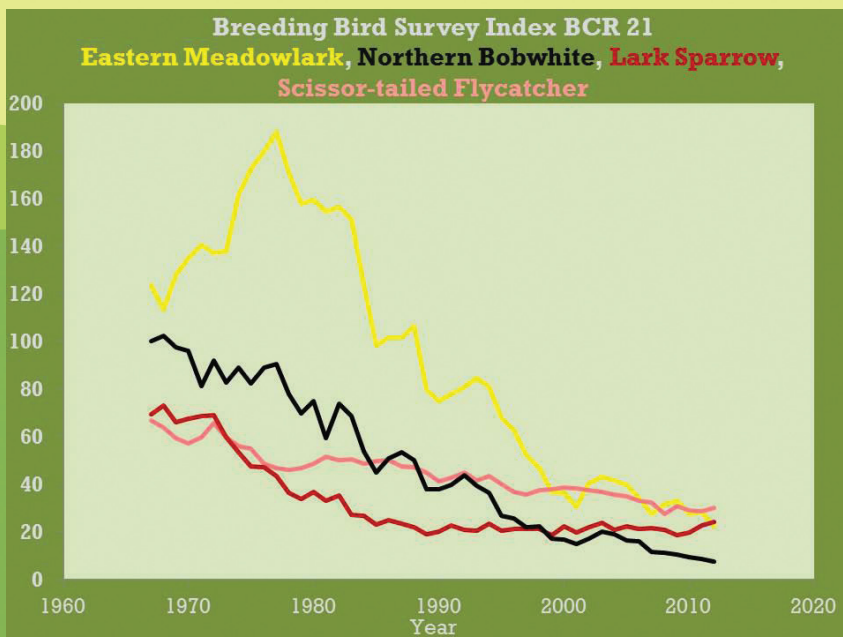


Figure 2

With over 95% of the land in this region under private ownership, public land management and regulatory strategies are not applicable solutions to the landscape scale challenges facing grassland birds. Strategies employed must rely on voluntary private landowner actions that will effectively deliver real benefits to grassland bird populations in the region. By far the dominant land use classification in this region of the country is native rangeland (>75% in many areas), although there are also significant amounts of cropland and non-native pastureland. Current land use trend data shows little change in the amount of native rangeland on the landscape, a marked decrease in cropland and an increase in non-native pastureland. In areas classified as native rangeland, habitat degradation is widespread as evidenced by the drastic declines in many of the wildlife species associated with these habitats. According to US Department of Agriculture Ag Census data, approximately 53,000 farm operations exist in the identified focus counties (described later) and average approximately 390 acres in size.



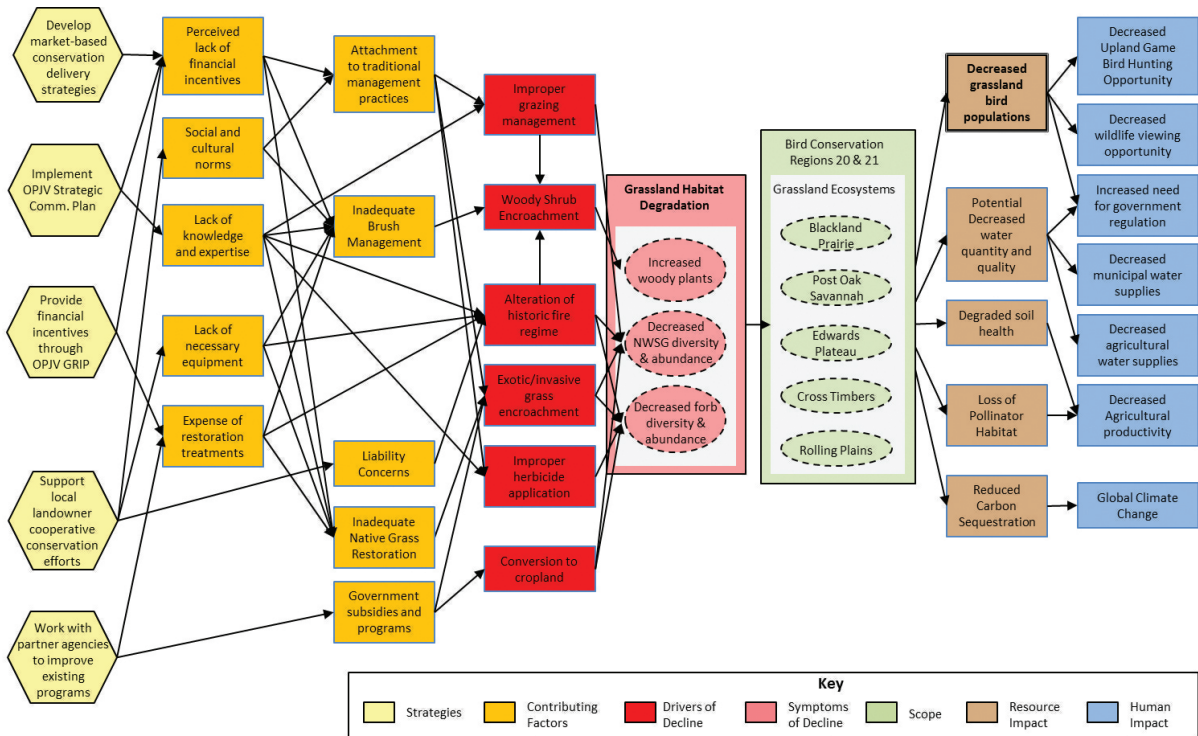
The working lands on this landscape can be very productive for livestock when properly managed, and the OPJV partnership desires to ensure that it remains that way, while also providing sufficient habitat for declining wildlife species. The prairie grasslands and savannahs of North America evolved under a fire/graze/rest regime and still depend on these processes to maintain productivity and diversity. Healthy native grassland/savannah ecosystems that have both native species diversity and natural processes in tact provide ample livestock forage, healthy wildlife populations, clean and abundant water resources, healthy soils, and even carbon sequestration. The goal of grassland conservation efforts in this region must be to collaborate with private landowners in ways that result in mutually beneficial improvements to the resources on which both humans and wildlife depend.



LOGIC FRAMEWORK

A logic framework is a diagram of a set of relationships between certain factors believed to impact or lead to a conservation target (focus species restoration). Logic frameworks are typically composed of several chains of logic whose arrows are read as "if-then" statements to help better understand how threats contribute to conservation target declines. Logic frameworks help define the conservation problem, assess limiting factors, and prioritize key strategies.

The following logic framework has been developed to assist readers of this plan in understanding the thought processes behind the strategies identified herein.



CONSERVATION OUTCOMES

The Joint Venture follows an adaptive management approach to bird conservation which includes biological planning, conservation design and delivery, and monitoring and research. The end result is a Strategic Habitat Conservation framework that links and strengthens these conservation tools as a repeating cycle of planning, doing, and learning (Plan-Do-Learn). The conservation delivery activities that are the primary focus of this plan are informed by significant biological planning and conservation design work that has already taken place. Through these processes the partnership has established biological objectives, identified key geographies where efforts should be focused, and identified proximal outcomes that should result from strategies employed.

Biological Objectives

Through the OPJV technical team, the OPJV partnership has invested significant time and effort into the identification of a set of focal grassland bird species (see Figure 3) and corresponding population and habitat objectives for each. A full discussion of the OPJV grassland bird objectives can be found in the *OPJV Grassland Bird Plan*. Focal species were selected because all rely on the OPJV geography for one or more stages of their life cycle and significant population declines have been documented over the past half century. As a group, the focal species also represent a wide range of grassland habitat requirements. Some, such as the Painted Bunting, require some amount of woody structure, while others, such as the Eastern Meadowlark, prefer larger expanses of open grasslands. By including species with a range of grassland habitat needs, the full diversity of seral stages historically found in these OPJV region are included.

A species of particular interest to many OPJV partner organizations is Northern Bobwhite (bobwhite). Due to its popularity as a game bird throughout the southeast, it serves a flagship species for many grassland conservation efforts. Bobwhite also serves as a convenient proxy for development of grassland habitat objectives. Of the species selected, the bobwhite has the greatest area requirement per individual and therefore the greatest habitat objectives identified in the *OPJV Grassland Bird Plan* at 3.06 million acres. Managing for bobwhites, which are generally associated with early to mid-successional grasslands, also ensures that a wide range of seral stages are available for birds adapted to specific grassland structural characteristics. When native species diversity is intact, bobwhite habitat is managed with disturbance (fire, grazing, disking) which can create early successional grassland habitat preferred by species like the Grasshopper Sparrow.

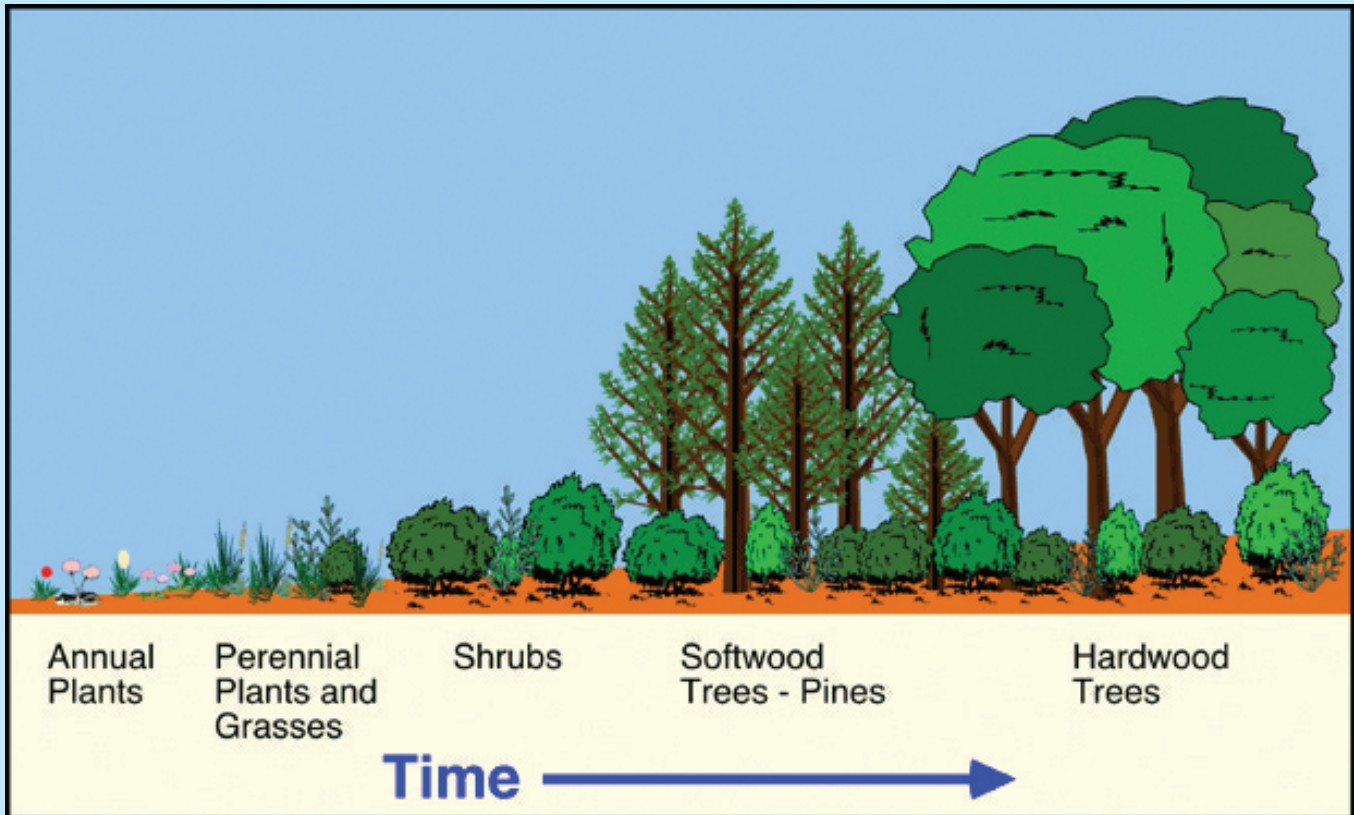


Figure 4

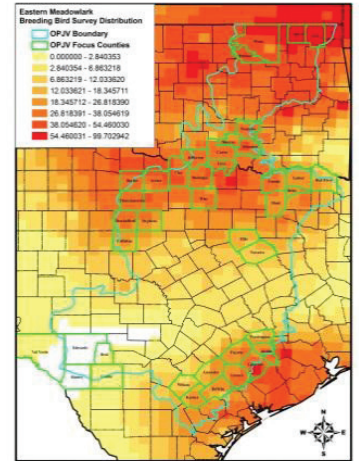
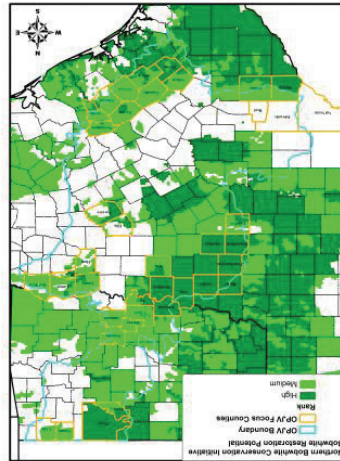
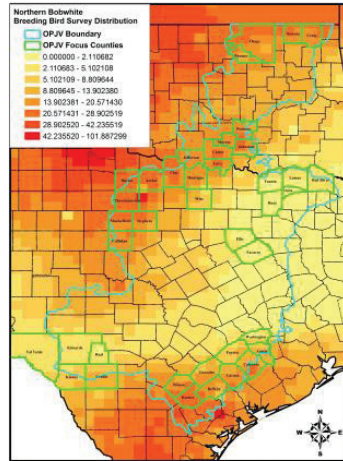
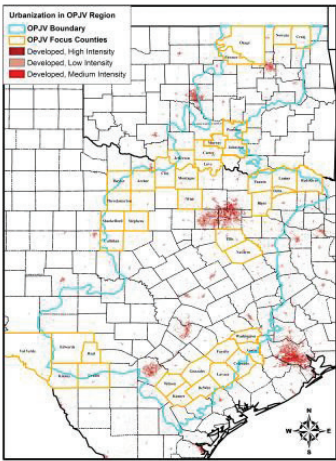
As a given grassland parcel proceeds from early successional to the mid-successional stage it will remain suitable for bobwhites while also providing habitat for later successional grassland species like Painted Bunting (see figure 4). Therefore, by managing for bobwhite on any given site, habitat is provided for a range of grassland species. Furthermore, by managing at the scale needed to reach bobwhite habitat objectives we ensure sufficient habitat will be provided to reach the population objectives for most grassland focal species.

Ecosystem succession has further implications for management objectives in that required one-time grassland

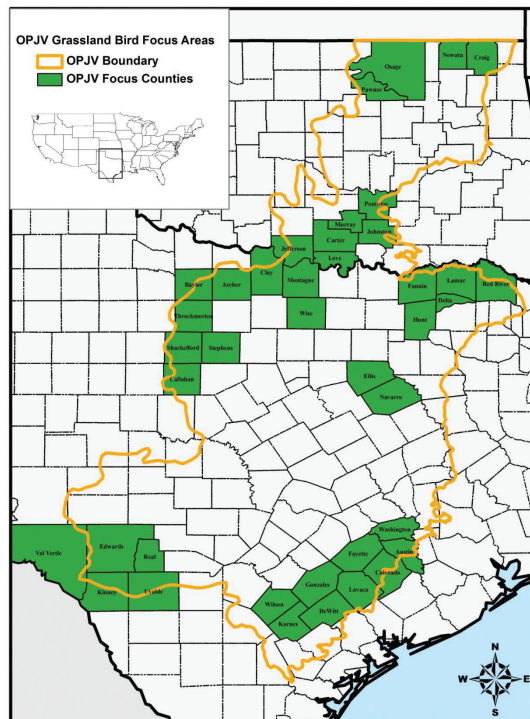
restoration treatments may not have the long term impact that they would in a more stable system. However, long-term impacts may still be achieved when those one-time treatments are incorporated into a long-term management system. A major assumption of this plan is that in the cases where identified activities will result in one-time treatments (e.g. providing financial incentives to a landowner for conducting a prescribed burn), landowners will view the benefits sufficient to incorporate similar activities into the long-term management system. Therefore, "duration of impact" is not included as a variable to consider under each activity in this plan but rather in the biological objectives.

Geographic Focusing

The 3.06 million acres identified as the bobwhite grassland habitat objective for BCR 20 and 21 equals approximately 3.5% of these two regions. If scattered evenly across this entire region, even an amount as large as 3.06 million acres would likely have negligible impacts on target populations due to size and proximity relationships of habitat fragments. Therefore the OPJV technical teams have made an effort to use available datasets (examples below) to identify multi-county areas where conservation work would be most effective and therefore where delivery efforts should be concentrated.



In order to reach the desired level of habitat concentration 50% of the habitat objectives will be achieved in these areas that make up a little more than 25% of the total BCR. The result is a set of multi-county focus areas (see map to the right) with a combined habitat objective of approximately 1,532,000 acres. This habitat objective serves as the primary objective for 2015-2025 for the strategies identified in this business plan.



Immediate Outcomes

Realizing the biological objectives identified in the OPJV Grassland Bird Plan is the ultimate goal of all OPJV related efforts. These biological objectives have been translated into habitat objectives that have then been “stepped down” to the identified focus areas. The resulting habitat objective serves as the overall goal of the activities described in this plan. **Over the course of 10 years (2015-2025) 1,532,000 acres will be improved in the focus counties** to provide suitable habitat for bobwhite and the other grassland bird focal species and ultimately increase their populations to the levels identified in the OPJV Grassland Bird Plan.

Whenever possible, outcomes of each of the activities included in this plan will be measured and tracked in terms of acres of improved habitat. Procedures for doing this are described in the *Monitoring and Evaluating Performance* section found later in this document.

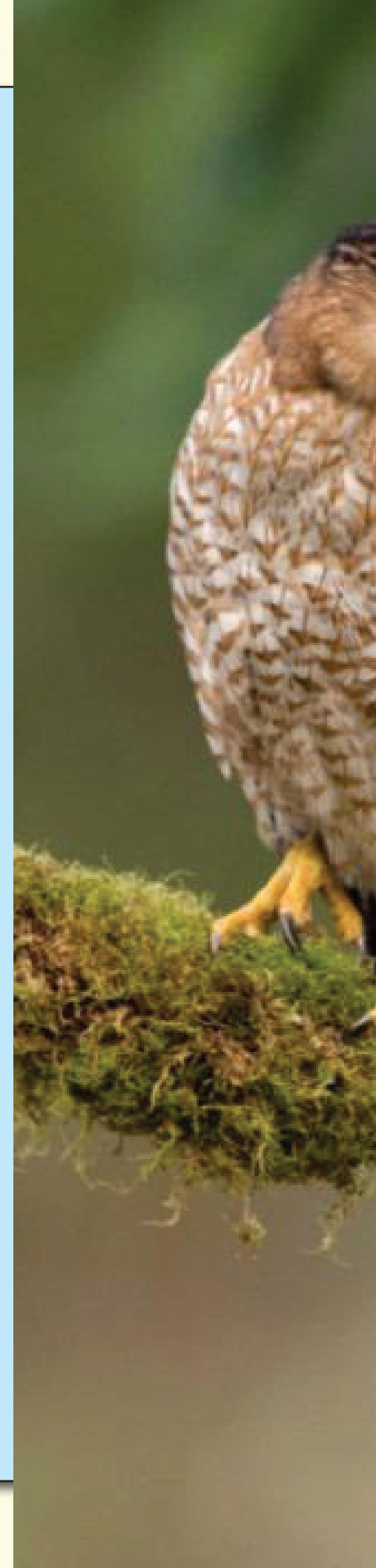
However, in some cases the relationship between the activities undertaken and the resulting amount of habitat improved is not easily quantified. In such cases, intermediate metrics may serve as immediate outcomes of those activities. Where this occurs, the intended result of “acres of improved habitat” will be modeled from information tracked and gathered through implementation of the activities.

Risk

Although a common topic in the world of finance and investing, risk is not a concept often considered in planning efforts in the conservation world. Since major conservation partners are often government agencies, it is understandable and desirable that risk-aversion is the default position relative to program development and implementation.

This plan uses risk to describe the probability that an activity will be unsuccessful in achieving the stated outcome. As used herein, risk does not refer to the probability of a negative event occurring, but rather, the probability of a positive event not occurring. Therefore, the greatest negative consequence is using funds/resources for an activity that does not have the desired effect.

Activities described in this plan were evaluated and ranked as high, medium, and low risk based on the likelihood of success and the cost of implementing the activity (which serves as the analog to the consequence of failure). In some cases, there is significant uncertainty surrounding the likelihood of success for the activities described herein. In such cases, this uncertainty is considered to





be analogous to low likelihood of success. Risk assessments and associated assumptions will be revised as knowledge is gained through implementation and outcome monitoring.

This plan proposes a number of activities that are categorized as “high risk.” It is the intent of the OPJV to inject a level of entrepreneurialism into conservation planning by including such strategies, which provide the potential for large gains at a lower cost. As in any investment strategy, this plan recommends that risk be mitigated by having a balanced investment portfolio. Higher risk strategies can often provide significant gain with relatively less investment. Lower risk strategies, although more dependable, may not be able to provide the level of gains desired. A balanced approach contains activities that cover the full spectrum of risk levels. This approach fosters the potential for significant gains, while also being resistant to large scale fluctuations.

There are a number of reasons why partnership efforts like the OPJV are just the place attempt these types of strategies. First; with a number of partners providing resources and support, the costs borne by any one partner can be reduced significantly. Second; by engaging partners with diverse abilities it is more likely that organizations or individuals may have specific expertise that would improve the likelihood that different strategies are successful. And third; although the individual partner programs can often be large and entrenched, the staff and capacity of the partnership is not, allowing us to be nimble, responsive and able to “fail fast, fix fast.”

Acquisitions and Easements

A major tool in the toolbox for conservationists is the conservation easement, or in some cases outright acquisition of land. Easements and acquisitions will play a vital role in grassland conservation and should be encouraged and supported in the OPJV BCR. However, the scope of this plan is specific to habitat restoration work. Easements deal with land ownership and tenure, which can ultimately determine the future condition of the land, but don’t directly result in restoration of ecological conditions. Quite often further resources from government partners or the land trust itself are needed to restore habitat and ensure that the acquired land supports healthy ecosystems.

Many of the activities in this plan can and will support management on lands that have conservation easements on them or are owned outright by conservation organizations. Therefore acres under conservation easements make a compensatory rather than additive contribution towards reaching grassland bird habitat objectives and are not included as strategies in this plan.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The strategies and activities described herein are to be carried out over the course of 10 years (2015-2025). These strategies directly contribute to the achievement of the OPJV grassland bird biological objectives and are directly supported by OPJV staff and/or resources. OPJV support may be in the form of providing biological planning and conservation design, direct funding and support of grassland conservation delivery, and/or monitoring impacts of activities on grassland bird populations. These strategies are not meant to represent the totality of partner efforts that address grassland bird objectives, but rather those that are directly tied to OPJV activities. The described activities are not, however, always led by the OPJV staff or management board. In some cases, OPJV partner organizations serve as lead, rather than OPJV staff. The activities included here represent a large scale, collaborative and strategic approach to achieving OPJV biological objectives. Financial information tables are included under each strategy and include information based on 10 year projected estimates.

Strategy 1: Provide financial incentives through the OPJV Grassland Restoration Incentive Program (GRIP) to private landowners for conducting beneficial grassland bird habitat management practices.

Oftentimes the expense of conducting beneficial treatments serves as a major barrier to landowners otherwise interested in improving the suitability of grassland bird habitat on their property. A common approach to addressing such barriers is to provide landowners with financial incentives for conducting identified practices. The OPJV GRIP was established in 2013 for that purpose. The GRIP utilizes state/private/corporate/federal funding to provide financial incentives for landowners who agree to conduct prescribed burning, brush control, prescribed grazing and/or native grass reseeding treatments on their property. There are currently two distinct GRIP delivery mechanisms; a state/privately funded program and a program provided through NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

Activity 1: Administer private/state funded OPJV GRIP in coordination with involved partner organizations.

OPJV staff support may include project development, managing contracts and agreements, coordinating with project managers, securing financial support from partners, facilitating ranking and evaluation of projects, ensuring effectiveness and efficiency of program, and public outreach.

Outcome = 20,000 acres of habitat improved annually from 2015-2025 (total 200,000 acres)

Activity 2: Facilitate NRCS administration of EQIP funded GRIP in coordination with involved partner organizations.

OPJV staff support may include project development, facilitating coordination among project managers, training NRCS and other involved partner organization staff and public outreach.

Outcome = 225,000 acres of habitat improved from 2015-2020.
225,000 acres of habitat improved from 2021-2025.

STRATEGY 1	POTENTIAL OUTCOME	COST	COST PER NOBO TERRITORY	% OF HABITAT OBJECTIVE	RISK
Activity 1	200,000 acres	\$3,000,000	\$247.50	13%	LOW
Activity 2	450,000 acres	\$10,000,000	\$412.00	26%	LOW

Strategy 2: Support local land owner cooperative conservation efforts.

Outside of the urban areas found in the region, the OPJV BCR is a landscape of working agricultural lands almost entirely privately owned. Social science research has shown that social norms have a major impact on rural landowner decision-making; and the formal and informal local landowner networks play a significant role in driving these social norms. Therefore, it is vital that conservation organizations engage with landowners and landowner networks at the local level. An effective strategy for doing this is to provide support and resources for existing and newly forming landowner cooperative efforts that are locally formed and landowner driven. A number of programs currently exist in the OPJV focus counties and there is the potential for development of others.

Activity 1: Continue to support existing landowner cooperative conservation efforts by providing biological planning, conservation tracking, and bird monitoring.

Currently OPJV staff works with at least 5 landowner cooperative groups (Wildlife Habitat Federation, Post Oaks South Texas Quail Working Group, Western Navarro Bobwhite Restoration Initiative, Red River Eastern Turkey Coop, and University of North Texas – Quail) located throughout the OPJV focal counties. The total membership of these organizations represents an estimated 200,000 acres currently. If (with OPJV support) these organizations could increase the amount of habitat that they impact by approximately 10%, significant habitat gains could be made. OPJV support could take the form of development of biological planning tools, support through existing financial incentive programs, tracking of conservation delivery, and monitoring of subsequent changes in bird populations.

Outcome = Increase habitat improved through membership in existing landowner cooperative organizations by 10% over 10 years (approximately 20,000 acres).

Activity 2: Increase capacity of local prescribed burn associations and Texas and Oklahoma statewide prescribed burn alliances.

In order to build a “culture of good fire” in the OPJV geography, it will be essential to build capacity among the landowner led prescribed burn associations that serve as “force multipliers” for partner agency prescribed burning outreach and education efforts. OPJV staff is currently providing assistance to these efforts as requested and will continue to stay engaged. OPJV staff provides expert technical guidance and training through assisting with private lands burns, participating in prescribed burn training and workshops, and educating policy makers and private insurers about benefits of burning and safety considerations involved in prescribed burn planning. Attaining insurance coverage is a major challenge confronting individual landowners as well as the local prescribed burn associations. Assisting with securing funding for insurance coverage may be a possible way OPJV partner organizations could contribute to the capacity of these organizations. According to PBAT members the estimated cost of this coverage is \$100,000 per year.

Outcome = 150,000 acres of prescribed burns conducted on private lands within the OPJV BCR by prescribed burn associations from years 2015-2025.

Activity 3: Implement the OPJV Cooperative Conservation Leadership Accelerator (CCLA).

OPJV will hire a CCLA coordinator to develop a training curriculum (year 1) and implement training for a 4-5 member organization cohort annually for the life of the project (years 2-10). Each annual cohort could produce at least one functioning landowner cooperative capable of producing 20,000 acres (estimated average impact of existing groups) of improved habitat (totaling 180,000 acres over 9 years).

Outcome = Develop a 1 year curriculum for building effective local conservation cooperative groups

Outcome = Train one 4-5 member organization cohort (multiple individuals will participate from each organization resulting in classes of 12-20 individuals) annually.

STRATEGY 2	POTENTIAL OUTCOME	COST	COST PER NOBO TERRITORY	% OF HABITAT OBJECTIVE	RISK
Activity 1	20,000 acres	\$0	\$0.00	1%	LOW
Activity 2	150,000 acres	\$1,000,000	\$110.00	10%	MED
Activity 3	180,000 acres	\$1,250,000	\$114.58	12%	HIGH

Strategy 3: Develop market-based conservation delivery strategies

When possible the OPJV partnership will work to provide economic incentives and remove economic disincentives that currently exist in the various markets that have an impact on grazing land management in Texas and Oklahoma. This is challenging due to the complexity and enormity of the forces that currently drive these markets. It is likely beyond the partnerships abilities to revolutionize any of these markets; however, small changes could yield significant improvements to grassland bird habitat.

Activity 1: Support implementation of the National Audubon Society “bird friendly beef” initiative in the OPJV BCR.

OPJV staff is committed to providing guidance and support for the implementation of this program in Texas through biological planning, design, and bird monitoring. The large scale impact of this program on grazing lands in the OPJV BCR is difficult to predict. However, given that the costs are largely borne by the consumer, this may be an example of a low cost/high reward program.

Outcome: 150,000 acres of habitat improved using grassland bird friendly practices required to receive “grassland bird friendly” certification from the National Audubon Society.

Activity 2: Use support of partnerships to increase the availability and quality of commercially available native grass seed while decreasing the cost to landowners.

As previously stated, expenses associated with conducting beneficial treatments often serve as a major barrier to landowners otherwise interested in improving the suitability of the grassland bird habitat on their property. One example is the high cost of purchasing native grass seed through commercial seed dealers. OPJV staff is working with a number of organizations to assist with collection of native seeds for planting and for native seed “grow outs” at plant material centers.

Outcome: Successful completion of the Coastal Prairie Partnership Coastal Prairie Seed Increase Project. This project seeks to produce prairie seeds on a large scale for prairie restorations on private and public lands.

Outcome: Harvest 5,000 pounds pure live seed (pls) annually through the Wildlife Habitat Federation SEED program which conducts harvest of wild seed for commercial distribution.

STRATEGY 3	POTENTIAL OUTCOME	COST	COST PER NOBO TERRITORY	% OF HABITAT OBJECTIVE	RISK
Activity 1	150,000 acres	\$250,000	\$27.50	13%	MED
Activity 2	5,000 acres	\$1,700,000	\$5,610	<1%	HIGH

Strategy 4: Implement OPJV Strategic Communications Plan

The expected outcomes of Strategies 1-3 make it clear that those strategies alone will not be enough to reach the lofty objectives identified for the OPJV BCR. It will be necessary also to conduct significant outreach into new audiences that are not currently working with partner staff or programs. The conservation delivery strategies identified in the OPJV Strategic Communications Plan were conceived to convey the “what, why, and how” of grassland conservation. Specifically, these strategies will communicate to target audiences which birds have been identified as “priority species” for conservation efforts, their basic ecology and habitat needs, occupied range, and population objectives. Additionally, strategies will address why conservation of grassland birds and functioning grassland ecosystems is important, how to employ best management practices (BMP’s) for improving grassland bird habitat, and encourage/facilitate participation in the OPJV Grassland Restoration Incentive Program (GRIP), as well as programs provided by other OPJV partner organizations (e.g. LIP, EQIP, Partners).

Activity 1: Implement strategies III.A.1-3, III.B.1-3, III.C.1-2, III.D.1-3 as identified in the OPJV strategic communications plan.

The gap between the outcomes of strategies 1-3 and the habitat objective in the focus areas is approximately 400,000 acres. Estimating the average landownership size to be 200 acres (a conservative estimate in many regions), 2,000 landowners would need to improve grassland bird habitat on their properties. Based on Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 1962), 16% of any given population is made up of “innovators” and “early adopters.” These individuals are those that most readily take up new practices and technologies. If we then assume that over the next 10 years we can convince 16% of our audience to adopt improved range management practices, then we need to reach 12,500 landowners in our target counties with the messages identified above. OPJV is working toward this end by contracting a communications specialist and working with partner organization communications staff.

Outcome: Reach 12,500 landowners in the focus counties with the identified messages using the world wide web, social media, print, billboards, presentations, etc.

STRATEGY 4	POTENTIAL OUTCOME	COST	COST PER NOBO TERRITORY	% OF HABITAT OBJECTIVE	RISK
Activity 1	400,000 acres	\$500,000	\$20.62	26%	MED

PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS: SUPPORTING ONGOING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS GRASSLAND BIRD DECLINE

OPJV partner organizations have been working for decades to deliver improved wildlife habitat across the region and throughout Texas and Oklahoma. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), US Fish and Wildlife Service, NRCS, Noble Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, Wildlife Habitat Federation, Texas Agrilife Extension, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) and others have all committed significant resources to providing technical guidance on private lands and often providing direct funding to landowners for conservation action. Other OPJV partners conduct scientific research and consistently provide technical guidance and expertise.

There is a renewed interest in grassland bird conservation throughout this region and nationwide. In 2013 the Texas legislature authorized the expenditure of over \$6 million of Upland Game Bird Stamp funds for Northern Bobwhite habitat restoration efforts.

Nationally, the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative brings together agencies and organizations throughout the Southeast and Midwest to combine efforts to restore this and other bird species dependent on grasslands. The OPJV is an active participant in the NBCI and was awarded the Group Achievement Award by the National Bobwhite Technical Committee that oversees NBCI in 2014.

The OPJV partnership and staff are directly involved with many of these efforts and continue to provide support in the form of biological planning, conservation design, and monitoring of bird populations. The great work that staff from OPJV partner organizations conducts every day across this region will serve as the foundation for efforts to deliver restored populations of grassland bird species (see figure 5). This plan outlines strategies that will serve as needed supplements to that work. These strategies will complement the work already being done and fill in gaps that may have been overlooked up to this point.





Estimated Northern Bobwhite Population 1995-2025 Bird Conservation Regions 20 & 21

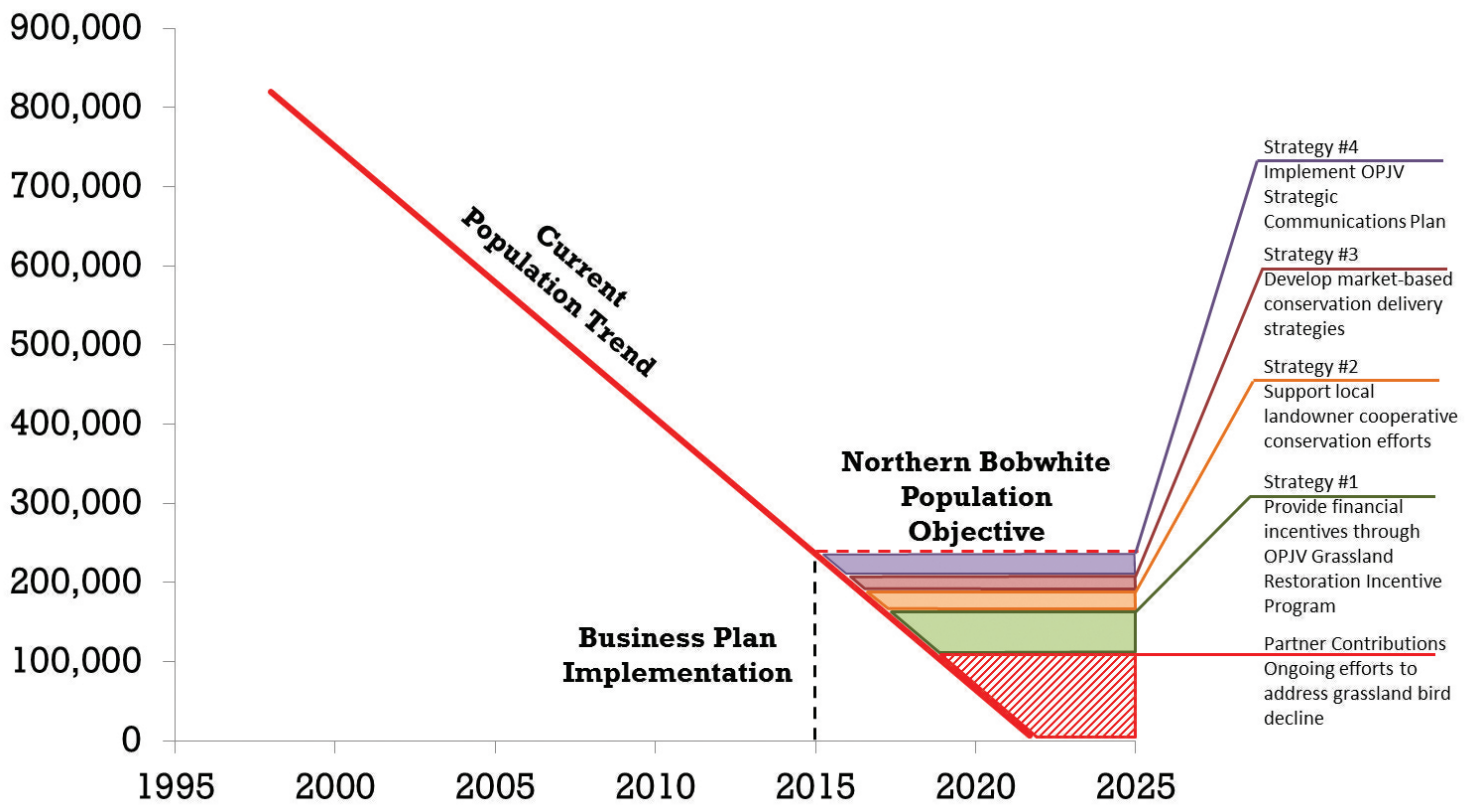
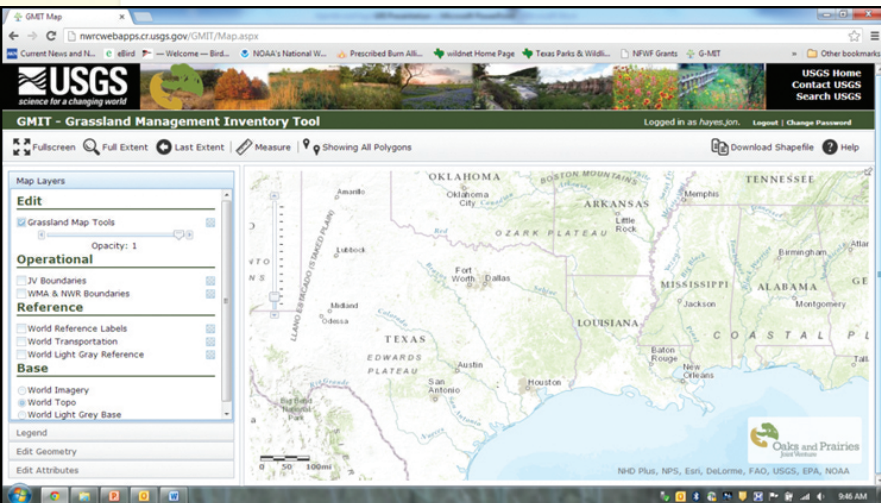


Figure 5

MONITORING AND EVALUATING PERFORMANCE

The partners of the OPJV have been working together since 2008 to establish shared bird population goals and grassland habitat objectives for the Oaks and Prairies BCR and the Edwards Plateau BCR. OPJV partners established several methods to measure and track progress toward these shared goals and objectives

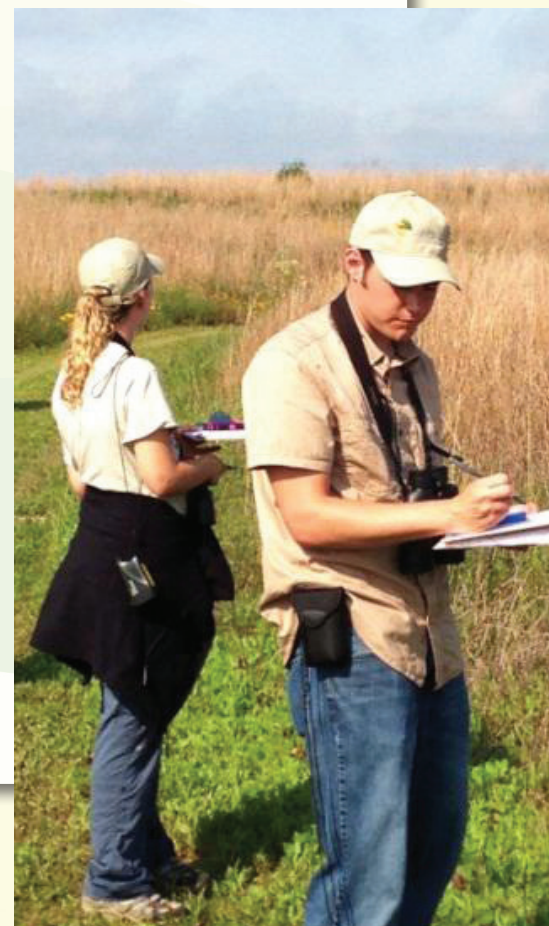


OPJV partners worked with Gulf Coast Prairie Landscape Conservation Cooperative biologists and the Advanced Applications Lab of the U.S. Geological Survey in Lafayette, LA, to build an online land management tracking platform to be used across organizations to track the progress of partner conservation activities. Our Grassland Management Inventory Tool (G-MIT) allows

individual users to login under their respective organization and to enter spatially-explicit, standardized grassland management information while maintaining privacy of landowner information. The tool allows for basic area calculations and annual habitat changes associated with grassland habitat objectives related to the following habitat categories: herbaceous vegetation height, bunchgrass clumps per acre, forb abundance, percent bare ground, percent exotic grass coverage, percent woody shrub coverage and woody shrub arrangement.

OPJV staff members have been working closely with TPWD and ODWC staff to establish county level coordinated bird population monitoring protocols to measure the impact of habitat management efforts on priority bird populations on a ten-year time frame. Several universities are helping these state agencies in data collection and analysis. Bird population data is collected at the county level to facilitate correlations with USDA county level Agricultural Statistics, and other partner grassland conservation efforts tracked by the G-MIT.

We are working under an adaptive management framework. The OPJV Grassland Technical Team will work with local agency biologists and local universities to use information collected in the population monitoring and the G-MIT to address assumptions and refine models used to establish the original population objectives. Tracking and monitoring data can be used to improve our ability to predict impacts of conservation actions toward meeting our shared goals and objectives.



FUNDING NEEDS

Funding needs identified in table below are projected amounts based on best available estimates for costs of strategies and activities described herein. These amounts are what would be required above existing OPJV and partner capacity. Current capacity, should it remain the same and/or increase may serve as a potential source of match to be leveraged for the amounts described below. Potential partners are those organizations who may be able to provide capacity, resources, match, or direct funding. Portions of dollar amounts include below could be satisfied through in-kind contributions of staff and resources.

	YEARS 1-5	YEARS 6-10	TOTAL	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
<i>Strategy 1: Provide financial incentives through OPJV GRIP</i>				
Activity 1	\$1,250,000	\$1,750,000	\$3,000,000	TPWD, QC Chapters, Private/Corporate Philanthropy
Activity 2	\$5,000,000*	\$5,000,000	\$10,000,000	USDA-NRCS
<i>Strategy 2: Support local landowner cooperative conservation efforts</i>				
Activity 1	\$0	\$0	\$0	WHF, WNBRI, UNT-Quail, RRETC, POST QWG
Activity 2	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000	PBAT, TPWD, Private/Corporate Philanthropy
Activity 3	\$540,000	\$650,000	\$1,190,000	Wells Fargo, TWA, Partners for Conservation, Private Philanthropy
<i>Strategy 3: Develop market-based conservation delivery strategies</i>				
Activity 1	\$250,000*	\$0	\$250,000	National Audubon Society
Activity 2	\$850,000	\$850,000	\$1,700,000	Prairie Seed Council, TNC, KPC, CPP, USDA- NRCS, TMN, WHF
<i>Strategy 4: Implement OPJV Strategic Communications Plan</i>				
Activity 1	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$500,000	Wood Foundation, TPWD, TWA, Agrilife Extension
TOTAL	\$8,640,000	\$9,000,000	\$17,640,000	

* Denotes funding that has already been committed by a partner organization.

NOTES:

NOTES:



Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture



GRASSLAND
RESTORATION
INCENTIVE PROGRAM



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For further information visit:
www.opjv.org
www.restoreourgrasslands.org