
The Small Wetlands Acquisition Program
of the
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Presented to the

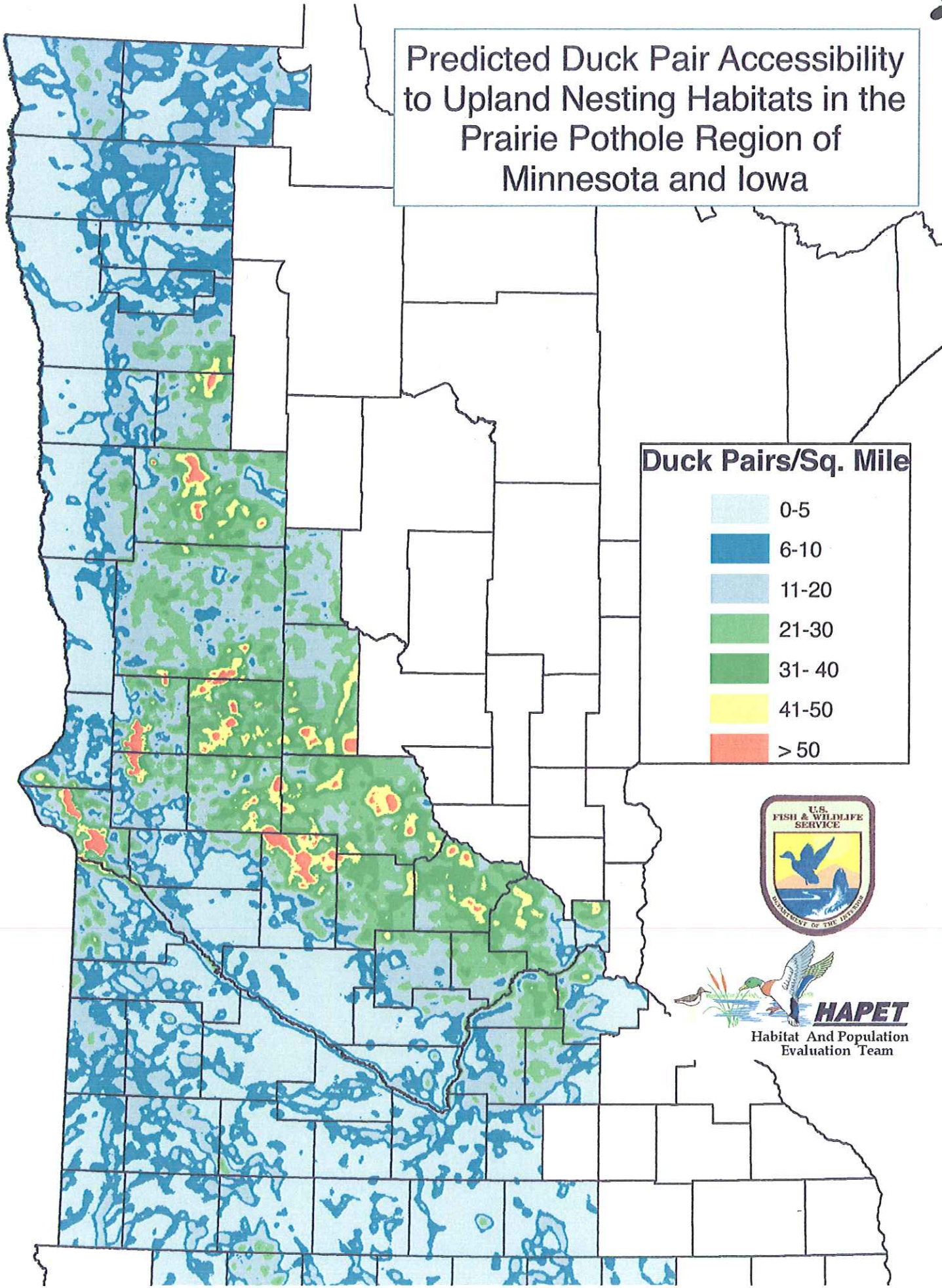
LESSARD OUTDOOR HERITAGE COUNCIL
January 26, 2009

- **Small Wetlands Acquisition Program** – began in 1958 with passage of the Duck Stamp Act amendment
- Allowing the FWS to acquire small wetlands and associated uplands in the Prairie Pothole Region of the U.S.
- These properties are referred to as **Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA)**.
- There are both fee and easement WPA's
- Annually the FWS spends between \$4-6 million on the acquisition of WPA's in Minnesota (Attachment 1).
- The dollars we spend on the acquisition of WPA's originates from the sale of Duck Stamps.
- Depending on the year, the FWS can acquire between 1,000 – 1,500 acres of new WPA's in Minnesota.
- The WPA program is well known to conservation partners in Minnesota, local units of government, the Land Exchange Board, and the Governor of Minnesota.
- With the wide distribution of wetlands in Minnesota you might ask how the FWS prioritizes which areas to purchase new WPA's?

- The FWS uses the “best science” approach in the evaluation of tracts of land offered for sale to the FWS by willing sellers.
- The FWS utilizes “landscape” level planning products produced by our Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET), out of our Fergus Falls office, during the evaluation process for land acquisition and restoration (See Attachments 2, 3, and 4).
- With the knowledge of the needs of prairie wildlife combined with landscape level products produced by our HAPET office, FWS field managers evaluate proposed acquisitions and prioritize which properties are most important for wetland and prairie wildlife.
- Attachment 5 and 6, are photos of the same piece of property. The first is what the property looked like before it was acquired by the FWS, and the second, after it was acquired and wetlands/grassland restored on this new WPA.
- Currently we have a backlog of 38 willing sellers from across the State, representing over 4,000 acres of land with an estimated value of \$11,650,000. *U.S.F.W.S has capacity to do 1/2 of this*
- To summarize the WPA program of the FWS, allow me to offer these facts:

- 1) Long history in Minnesota dating back to 1958,
- 2) Proven track record and recognized for our wetland and grassland expertise.
- 3) Annual spends \$4-6 million on WPA acquisition in MN.
- 4) Annually we have a backlog of interested landowners willing to sell their land to the FWS.
- 5) The current impediment to addressing this backlog is a lack of land acquisition dollars.

Predicted Duck Pair Accessibility to Upland Nesting Habitats in the Prairie Pothole Region of Minnesota and Iowa






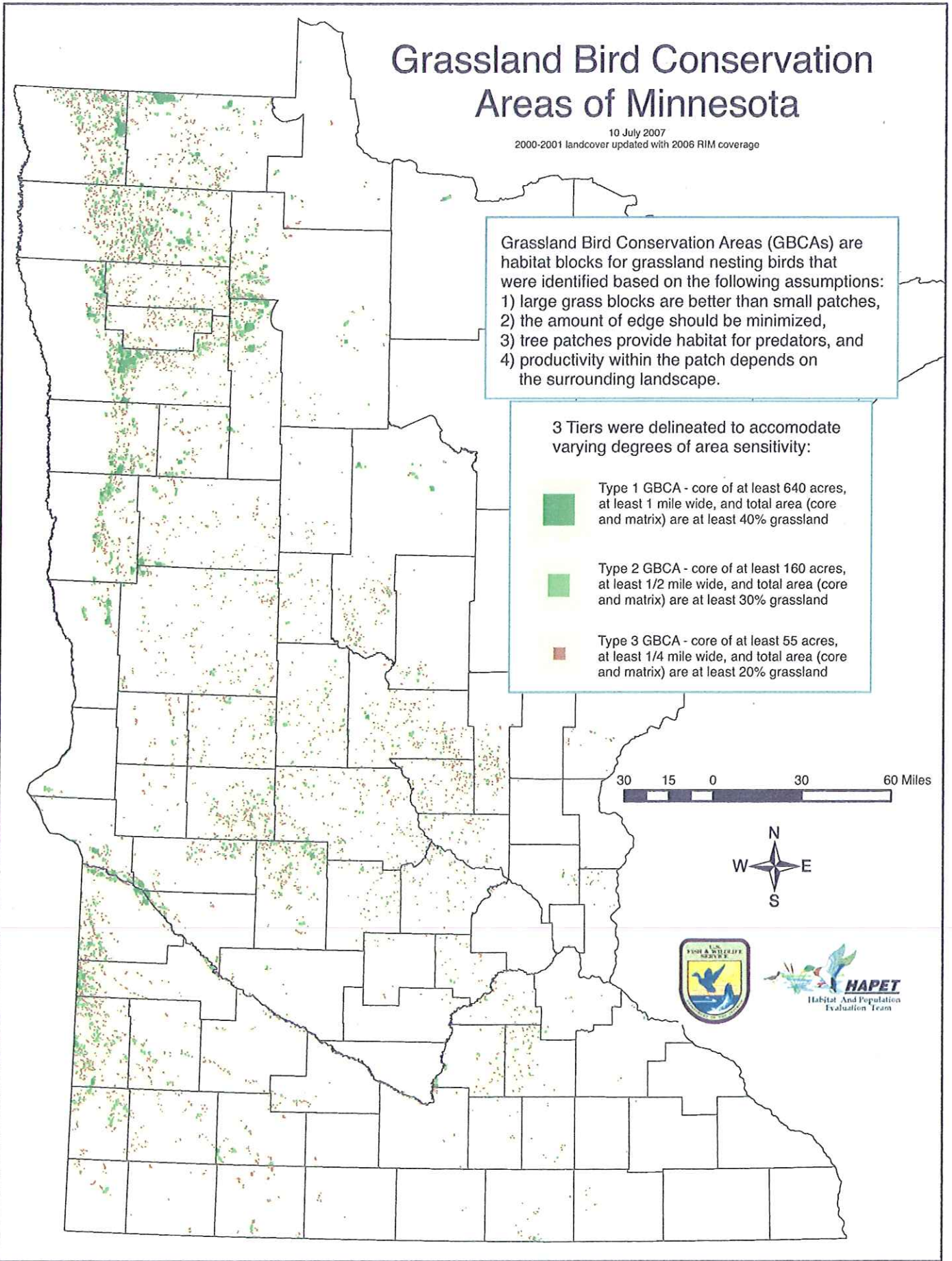
Grassland Bird Conservation Areas of Minnesota

10 July 2007
2000-2001 landcover updated with 2006 RIM coverage

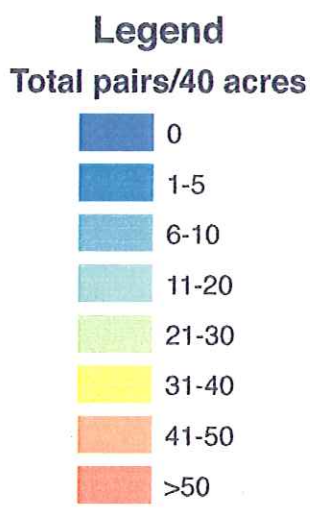
Grassland Bird Conservation Areas (GBCAs) are habitat blocks for grassland nesting birds that were identified based on the following assumptions:
1) large grass blocks are better than small patches,
2) the amount of edge should be minimized,
3) tree patches provide habitat for predators, and
4) productivity within the patch depends on the surrounding landscape.

3 Tiers were delineated to accommodate varying degrees of area sensitivity:

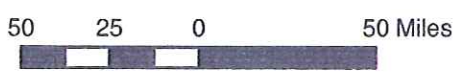
-  Type 1 GBCA - core of at least 640 acres, at least 1 mile wide, and total area (core and matrix) are at least 40% grassland
-  Type 2 GBCA - core of at least 160 acres, at least 1/2 mile wide, and total area (core and matrix) are at least 30% grassland
-  Type 3 GBCA - core of at least 55 acres, at least 1/4 mile wide, and total area (core and matrix) are at least 20% grassland



Predicted Number of Grassland Nesting Bird Pairs in the Prairie Pothole Region of Minnesota and Iowa



Total includes Bobolink, Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Sedge Wren



Models estimate the number of breeding pairs for each species based on the amount of grass, trees, and/or hay in the landscape. Models were based on point count surveys conducted in 2003-2005 throughout the Tallgrass Prairie Pothole Region.

