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Rose Lake State Wildlife Area

Master Plan

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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WILDLIFE DIVISION

IC 2039 (Rev. 6-11-2012)

STRATEGIC PLAN

This plan has been developed to set management direction for the Rose Lake State Wildlife Area and establishes goals and objectives consistent with those identified for State Game Areas and State Wildlife Areas in the Southwest Michigan Regional Wildlife Area Management Plan. It also supports goals identified in larger scale plans including the Michigan Wildlife Action Plan, the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative, the American Woodcock Conservation Plan, and the Upper Great Lakes Woodcock and Young Forest Initiative.

The Rose Lake State Wildlife Area (SWA) is located in southeast Clinton County and southwest Shiawassee County, approximately 10 miles to the northeast of Lansing and consists of approximately 4,000 acres (Figure 1).

When setting the desired future conditions, it is necessary to consider the purpose for which the property was acquired by the state, current land cover conditions, and future social and economic forces that could influence management strategies. The intended purpose for the initial purchase of the Rose Lake SWA in 1938 was for additional game bird production, experimentation, and demonstration of integrating wildlife management into farm management practices. Several subsequent acquisitions were purchased for and are still aimed at wildlife restoration, while providing hunting and trapping recreation.

Due to its location in the State and its proximity to Lansing, Rose Lake SWA is a highly used area for many people in pursuit of varying recreational activities. Some of these activities include hunting, trapping, fishing, bird watching, hiking, cross country skiing, etc. The focus of future management will maximize the opportunity for hunting and trapping recreation as well as providing habitat for Featured Species. Opportunity for other forms of recreation will be managed for and encouraged as long as they do not interfere with management for which the area is dedicated.

Much of the western portion of the SWA was historically farmed. While portions of it are still in agricultural production through sharecrop agreements or are maintained as open grasslands, much of the land that was previously farmed has grown into shrubland or forested land. The western portion of the SWA also contains several small lakes and impoundments. Adjoining most of these water features are the typical lowland shrub swamp and lowland hardwoods. The eastern portion of the SWA is largely forested with a mix of hardwoods along with an aspen component.

Several options were considered when determining management direction of the Rose Lake SWA but were not selected for various reasons:

- Abundant white-tailed deer populations. White-tailed deer currently reside on the Rose Lake SWA in good numbers. Several of the more recent land acquisitions were purchased to secure additional habitat for deer and, by acquiring those

parcels, that objective has been met. Much of the current and future habitat management aimed at other Featured Species on the SWA will also benefit deer on the SWA.

- Fully developed access to lakes for fishing. While several of the small lakes on the Rose Lake SWA are popular for panfish, particularly in the winter, providing access for fishermen is not a part of the intended purpose of the area. Current and future management of the Rose Lake SWA will, however, continue to provide access for walk-in anglers and carry-in boaters where these activities do not interfere with the intended purpose of the area.
- Abundant populations of wetland furbearers including muskrat, mink, beaver and otter. The Vermillion Creek, Mud Creek, and several small lakes provide suitable habitat for many furbearing species including beaver and otter which are generally not abundant this far south in Michigan. While specific management activities designed to directly benefit these species are not being planned here, protection of riparian habitat, both in and along these wetland systems on the area will continue to provide good habitat for these species.
- Expanded efforts to improve habitat for waterfowl. Rose Lake SWA is not a waterfowl hunting destination, but Vermillion Creek, Orange Flooding, and other small potholes on the area currently provide ample opportunity for local waterfowl hunters to be successful and take advantage of that recreational opportunity. Protection of riparian habitat, both in and along these wetland systems on the area will continue to provide good habitat for waterfowl.

What follows is the strategic direction for Rose Lake State Wildlife Area. This plan describes the **goals** or desired future condition for the area, the **objectives** under each goal, and the **actions** associated with each objective. For the purposes of this master plan, the following definitions will be used:

Goal – A desired future condition of the area.

Objective – A management approach or strategy that the best science suggests can be used to move the area toward the goal. An objective is a quantifiable input to be completed within a defined timeframe that contributes towards accomplishing the goal.

Action – An operational means to accomplish an objective. An action is a step needed to complete an objective and is described in sufficient detail to inform planning. An action is a quantifiable input to be completed within a defined timeframe that contributes towards accomplishing the objective.

It is expected to take approximately ten years to complete all the objectives.

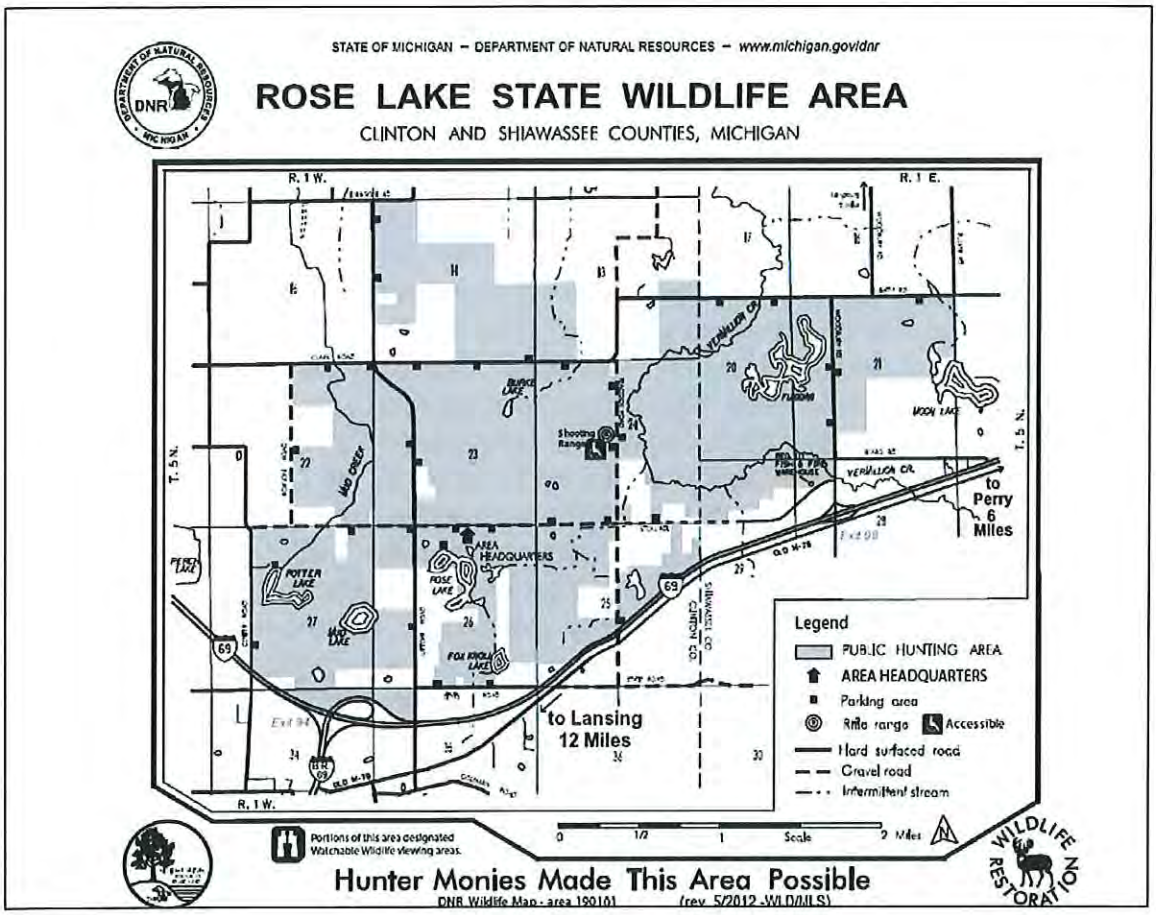

Figure 1: Map of the Rose Lake State Wildlife Area

Desired Future Conditions

Goal I is a stable, abundant population of wild turkeys on the Rose Lake SWA.

Rationale: 1) wild turkeys are a Featured Species and also a popular game species; 2) wild turkey management is supported by the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Michigan Wild Turkey Hunters Association and other sporting groups and hunters; 3) wild turkeys are valued by non-hunters for viewing purposes.

Assessment: Discussion with turkey hunters and observation of turkeys and turkey sign.

Objective A is to establish and maintain a diverse forest that provides adequate hard and soft mast production, as well as suitable roosting, displaying, nesting and brood rearing cover for wild turkeys.

Action 1. Allow selected lowland hardwood stands located throughout the Rose Lake SWA to develop and mature.

Action 2. Identify and inventory current oak stands by December of 2013

Action 3. Develop forest management strategies to increase mast production and oak regeneration by April 2014.

Objective B is to provide an agriculturally based late fall and winter food source for wild turkeys.

Action 1. Provide grain food source through implementation of sharecropping or establishment of food plots within the Rose Lake SWA

Goal II is a stable, abundant cottontail rabbit population on the Rose Lake SWA.

Rationale: 1) cotton-tailed rabbits are a Featured Species and are a desirable game species; 2) quality habitat for these species currently exists on the Rose Lake SWA; 3) small game hunting is important as recreational opportunity for new hunters; 4) habitat projects associated with this goal will also benefit white-tailed deer populations and associated recreation.

Assessment: Discussion with hunters and observation of rabbits and rabbit sign.

Objective A is to establish and maintain dense brush/grassy vegetation and food sources in idle fields throughout the SWA.

Action 1. Continually manage selected fields and forests in early successional stages through timber sales and mowing

Action 2. Create brush piles suitable for rabbit cover in selected old fields and forest edges throughout the SWA.

Goal III is a stable, abundant, woodcock population, including both local breeders and spring and fall migrants on the Rose Lake SWA.

Rationale: 1) woodcock are a Featured Species and a desirable game species; 2) quality habitat for woodcock currently exists on the SWA-but is in need of management; 3)) both the Upper Great Lakes Woodcock and Young Forest Initiative and the American Woodcock Conservation Plan indicate that continental woodcock populations are on a long term decline, likely caused by habitat loss; 4) habitat projects associated with this goal will also benefit rabbit, white-tailed deer, and ruffed grouse populations and associated recreation.

Assessment: Discussion with hunters and observation of woodcock.

Objective A is to establish, for all early successional vegetation types, a sustainable harvest regime that will incorporate patches of different age classes to provide cover suitable for roosting, feeding, nesting and brood rearing woodcock by 2018.

Action 1. Identify aspen stands that need to be cut by December 2013.
Action 2. Develop strategy to harvest aspen stands on a rotational basis by April 2014.
Action 3. Begin timber harvest by January 2015.
Action 4. In selected fields where woody vegetation has become established, periodically mow shrubs and young trees in small patches and strips to set back succession and provide a variety of young forest conditions.
Action 5. Maintain selected small herbaceous fields adjacent to young forests by mowing and herbicide application.

Goal IV is a sustainable, abundant population of ring-necked pheasants.

Rationale: 1) pheasants are a Featured Species and a highly desirable game species; 2) The Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative calls for doubling the current pheasant population in Michigan; 3) Rose Lake SWA was identified as an area to increase habitat management for pheasants; and 4) there is a local stakeholder group that actively advocates for and funds pheasant management.

Assessment: crowing surveys and hunter satisfaction; observation of pheasants and pheasant sign.

Objective A is to establish and reclaim approximately 500 acres of grasslands in the area between Peacock Rd and Upton Rd by 2018 (Figure 2).

Action 1. Reclaim selected old fields by mowing back brush by September 2014.
Action 2. Remove selected hedgerows, fencerows, and small woodlots to create large, contiguous grasslands by October 2018.
Action 3. Continue sharecrop contracts to keep fields open and provide winter food and cover for pheasants.
Action 4. Plant selected fields to switchgrass or a warm season grass/forb mix to provide suitable winter and brood-rearing cover by June 2018.

Objective B is to control invasive species where appropriate in the 500 acre grassland unit.

Action 1. use mowing/cutting and herbicide to control autumn olive, honeysuckle, and black locust.
Action 2. Spot treat herbaceous invasives such as spotted knapweed, Canada thistle, etc. with herbicide as needed.

Objective C is to establish and maintain suitable woody vegetation that provides escape cover for pheasants within the 500 acres grassland unit.

Action 1. Maintain brushy edges along grassy fields as escape cover for pheasants.
Action 2. Remove tall trees from fence rows and field edges that act as raptor perches.

Goal V is to continue the advancement of knowledge by allowing access for user groups and research where appropriate.

Rationale: 1) the area is in close proximity to a local community college and a major university; 2) the area is near a large population center and several school districts.

Assessment: number of school group visits and number of use permits for research.

Objective A is to allow university research in areas that do not interfere with the intended use of the area.

Action 1. Review all research proposals submitted for the area and approve those that do not interfere with the intended use of the area.

Objective B is to continue allowing school groups and other user groups to access the area where appropriate.

Figure 2: Map of the Pheasant Restoration Initiative at the Rose Lake State Wildlife Area.

Recreational and Commercial Uses

Recreational and commercial uses on the area that are not incidental to our management for the purposes described above are generally not allowed. These uses can be allowed, however, under the following circumstances:

1. The uses must not interfere or conflict with the wildlife conservation purposes of the area described above.
2. The DNR has no obligations to determine if requested uses would conflict or interfere; the burden of determining must remain with those requesting the uses.
3. The requested uses cannot be exclusive of other allowable uses and must not result in the DNR losing management control of any portion of the area.

4. A lack of a specific prohibition in rules and regulations for the area does not constitute approval of the activity.
5. The DNR always reserves the ability to disallow activities previously allowed as wildlife conservation needs dictate.

Additionally, the DNR will continue to monitor any existing commercial and recreational uses for interference with the intended purposes of the area as described in this plan.

Review and Approval

This plan was available for public review and comment on the DNR website between May 1, 2015 and May 31, 2015. During this period no comments were received for this plan. The final plan was approved on June 25, 2015 and will be reviewed within 10 years of the approved date.

Approvals

6/25/15

Chad Fedewa, Wildlife Biologist (Author) Date

6/25/15

John Niewoonder, Field Operations Manager Date

6-25-15

Steve Chadwick, Regional Supervisor Date