

## WRITING A MANAGEMENT PLAN



The Management Plan is a document that describes what you want to do for wildlife on your property, and how it will be accomplished. It is a step-by-step formula for what you want to do on your land, and when, where, and how you will accomplish the plan. The plan provides a timeline, which can project future phases of improvement, management, or maintenance. Further, it can be a record of what you have already done. As you write down the differences your efforts have made, you will most likely also realize impacts you probably could not have predicted. Such realizations will help you to consider changes in your plan, new goals and objectives, and alternatives for achieving them.

Although some people dread actually writing the plan, it does not have to be difficult. For smaller projects it can be as simple as a

quick sketch and a few notes. Larger projects may be more complex with maps, photos, drawings, references, and detailed outlines of habitat improvement projects as time and energy allow. As you might expect, the management plan is a clear reference that will guide you to accomplishing your goals. This chapter will show you how to write a management plan that is focused, realistic for your expectations, and --most importantly-- doable.

### Creating a Project Map

The other chapters in this section on Habitat Planning explain the many considerations that you must ponder before writing the plan. Now that you've decided on one or more specific projects, you can write your management plan. A good way to visualize your plan, before actually writing it out, is to create a project map. The project map will help you to see where you've been and where you want to go next. This map is dependent on the Base Map created in the first step of the planning process, **Evaluating the Land**, which shows how to make inventories of habitat types, plants, and animals that already exist on your property. The Base Map includes the major existing habitats and land features. This information helps you determine what you could reasonably expect to do within the context of the surrounding landscape.

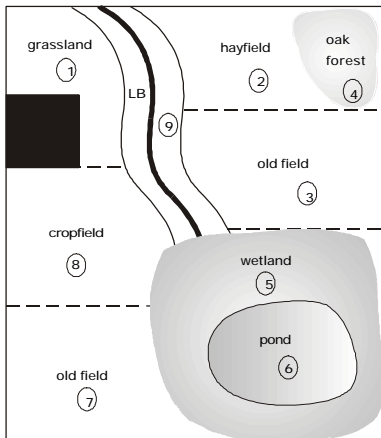
To create a Project Map, use the Base Map as the foundation, and for each habitat, or site, write in the habitat projects that will be implemented. This entails either leaving existing features that already benefit wildlife, enhancing them, or replacing non-beneficial existing features with the management action you decided on in the previous planning steps. Numbering each site on the base map before creating the Project Map will help in writing the management plan as it will organize the areas into workable units. The example maps shown on the next page illustrate this process.

### Writing Out the Plan

The next step to writing a management plan is to actually write out the final draft of the plan. This includes listing your goals along with the objectives and actions that will take place at each site. A good way to organize your final draft is to write out your habitat projects by site. Under each site, list in detail the objectives that will be fulfilled, the actions that are required, and when they will be implemented. Be as specific as possible as this is the write-up that you will refer to for details. Please see the accompanying example of a written management plan on the last page of this chapter.

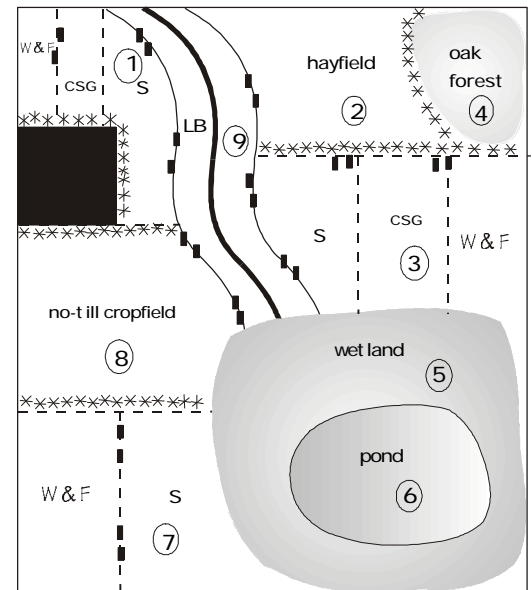
Since maintenance is also a key part of any management plan, consider adding a maintenance schedule to your plan. For example, your

## 40 Acres



Base map created during evaluation of the land. Sites are numbered for organizational purposes

Existing features	
—	Road
■	House and Yard
~	Stream
LB	Lowland Brush
Habitat projects	
CSG	Cool Season Grasses
W & F	Warm Season Grasses and Forbs
S	Switchgrass
*	Shrub plantings
■	Nest boxes



Once you have decided on what projects will be completed, create a project map from the base. This map will show where the projects will take place and is used as a visual reference to the written management plan.

field of switchgrass for winter cover may require mowing or burning every three years, or perhaps you have adopted a rotational maintenance schedule where you treat one third of the field each year. Writing down maintenance schedules will help you to plan your time, and is also the best way to remember the important things that need to be done. Ignoring the necessary maintenance will prevent you from enjoying the full benefit of your habitat plan.

This is also a good time to review your plan to determine which goals are short-term and which are long-term. In other words, it is important to know which projects may produce immediate results, and which may not show results for years. Because long-term projects may take years to implement, you may also want to plan some activities that will pro-

duce immediate results, such as building nest boxes for certain bird species. Remember to be patient, most management plans require several years before tangible results can be seen. Wait for vegetation to become established. After that, wildlife should move into the habitat you have created.

### Creating a Timeline

A supplemental tool to your management plan is a timeline that consists of your management activities. This year-by-year list of actions will help you to stay organized, and to keep track of what action must occur when. A timeline is another way of writing out your plan as it allows you to view the actions chronologically, rather than site-by-site. While keeping track of the overall big picture, a timeline helps you focus on the step-by-step process one task at a time. Not only will this give you a sense of

accomplishment along the way, but it will also make the overall plan less overwhelming. Please see the example timeline.

### Implementation and Monitoring your Results

Once you have written your plan, it is time to implement it. Implementation means turning your plan into reality as you begin to accomplish your goals. During implementation, follow your plan and timeline carefully, but realize that changes can always be made if problems arise. Flexibility is important in a good management plan.

After you have implemented your plans, it is important to monitor your results and determine if you have accomplished what you wanted. Sometimes, unexpected results occur, such as changes in

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## Timeline

*This is an example of a timeline for completing habitat projects based on the example project map. Following a timeline will break the project up into workable pieces, and allow you to visualize both the short and long term results.*

### Year One

Spring: Planning process  
Fall: Remove encroaching trees and brush  
Prepare site 1 for planting (could include mowing, Round-up, plow and removal)  
Begin no-till farming in site 3  
Erect nest boxes

### Year Two

Spring: Plant NWSG and wildflowers in section 1, site 1  
Plant CSG and clover in section 2, site 1  
Plant switchgrass in section 3, site 1  
Plant shrubs on site 1 and around house  
Fall: Prepare site 3 for planting  
Check nest boxes and repair any damage

### Year Three

Spring: Plant switchgrass in section 1, site 3  
Plant CSG and clover in section 2, site 3  
Plant NWSG and wildflowers in section 3, site 3  
Plant shrubs on site 3 and around site 4  
Summer-Fall: Prepare site 7 for planting  
Mow hayfield between July 15 and August 31  
Apply selective herbicide to NWSG if necessary to remove competition  
Check nest boxes and repair any damage

### Year Four

Spring: Plant NWSG and wildflowers in section 1, site 7  
Plant CSG in section 2, site 7  
Plant switchgrass in section 3, site 7  
Plant remaining shrubs  
Burn NWSG on 1/4 to 1/3 annual rotation  
Summer-Fall: Mow CSG in section 1 on 1/4 to 1/3 annual rotation  
Check nest boxes and repair any damage  
Evaluate management plan and consider alternatives if necessary

the land or attraction of unwanted species, and additional actions will need to be planned. Not every project will be successful, of course, and if the changes are unwanted you may have to start the process over and determine a new goal. However, often your goal is obtained, and monitoring your success is a way to keep in touch with

your land after the planning process is complete. Keeping a journal is a good way to keep track of your progress, and will help you to see the differences you have made on the land. This may also help you determine potential problems and possibly catch them before they occur.

Monitoring your results is often the most rewarding part of the planning process. You will be able to see what you have accomplished through your hard work and careful planning. The landscape developments that occur and the new sightings of wildlife you observe will bring much satisfaction. Simply writing down the day you saw the first pair of bluebirds setting up a household in the nesting box you installed is a memorable event that is fun to record. You will realize the same enjoyment when the purple coneflowers you planted in the butterfly garden begin to bloom, or that spring morning you heard a cock pheasant crow.



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## Wildlife Management Plan Final Draft

**Goals:** To attract pheasants and other grassland birds

Acres: 40 acres

### Site 1

Nesting, brood rearing, winter cover, and food producing areas will be developed on this site at locations identified on the project map. This site will be divided into three sections. Each section should be planted in north to south strips, and should be at least 60 ft wide. Travel corridors will also be established.

The first section will be planted to native warm season grasses and forbs. This includes a mixture of big bluestem, little bluestem, indian grass, and a variety of native wildflowers. This area will be used as winter cover and as a food source.

The second section will be planted to cool season grasses and clovers which consists of a mixture of timothy at 2 lbs / acre, orchard grass at 2 lbs / acre, white sweet clover at 2 lbs / acre, and medium red clover at 2 lbs / acre. This area will be used for nesting, brood rearing, and as a source of food.

The third area will be planted to switchgrass at a rate of 4-6 lbs / acre. This will be used as a wintering area.

Chemical and mechanical methods should be used to control competing grasses and weeds within the planting areas. This site will be prepared in the fall of the first year, and planted in the spring of the second year. The cool season grasses will be mowed on a one third annual rotation starting the third year after planting between July 15 and Aug 31. The warm season grasses will be burned on an annual rotation starting the third year after planting. Prescribed burns will be conducted in the spring before the new growth is 1-3 inches tall and before bird nesting begins. This stand will be burned every 3-5 years. Remember to notify local fire department before burning.

To provide travel corridors and an additional source of food, fruit producing shrubs such as highbush cranberry, dogwood, and crabapple will be planted along the south perimeter of the site, and around the home site. Two rows of shrubs will be planted 8 feet apart and 8 feet between rows, with the trees staggered between rows.

Nest boxes will be installed and maintained as indicated on the project map the fall of the first year. They will be checked and maintained annually.

### Site 2

This area provides valuable wildlife habitat and will be left undisturbed. However, a mowing rotation will be established at year four and mowed on a one quarter rotation.

### Site 3

Nesting, brood rearing, winter cover, and food producing areas will be developed on this site at locations identified on the project map. The site will be divided into three sections and planted to warm season grasses, cool season grasses and clovers, and switchgrass. This area will be prepared the fall of the second year, and planted in the spring of the third year. It will be planted and maintained as described in site 1. Fruit producing shrubs will also be planted on the north border of the site to provide a travel corridor and a food source.

### Site 4

The oak trees found on this site provide valuable wildlife habitat. This area will be left undisturbed. Fruit producing shrubs will be planted along the perimeter of this site to lessen the impact of predators in the grassy areas by reducing the existing harsh edge created by the forest.

### FOR ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS CONTACT:

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**Private Land Partnerships:** This partnership was formed between both private and public organizations in order to address private lands wildlife issues. Individuals share resources, information, and expertise. This landowner's guide has been a combined effort between these groups working towards one goal: Natural Resources Education. We hope this manual provides you with the knowledge and the motivation to make positive changes for our environment.

FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE: CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT