

NARRATIVE REPORT

1989

AUDUBON WETLAND MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
AUDUBON GARRISON WETLAND MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

COLEHARBOR, NORTH DAKOTA

EXHIBIT

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A. HIGHLIGHTS

- John's Lake WPA (334.5 acres) is transferred to the FWS from the Small Business Administration. (Section C.1)
- Second year of drought dominates all aspects of WMD management. Dry conditions from 9/87 to 12/89 have dried virtually all wetlands. (Section B)
- 13 easements comprising 955 wet acres were evaluated, recommended, and purchased. (Section C.2)
- Wildlife extension program and farmbill activities on private lands, although time consuming, continue to produce wildlife and protect habitat. (Section F.1)
- Grassland management activities through short-duration grazing and emergency haying involve many cooptors with good results. (Section F.7 and F.8)
- Duck numbers and production are dismal. (Section G.3)
- WMD manager Antonette receives Special Achievement Award for ditch plug work. (Section E.1)
- Rich, Marilyn, Duane, Pete, Craig and Mick received a Group Special Achievement Award for Farmbill work and emergency haying and grazing programs. (Section E.1)

B. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Drought continued to dominate the weather in 1989. The winter of 88-89 was mild and dry and very little run-off occurred. The advent of spring was a long process beginning in January and ending with summer temperatures in June. Portions of Ward County received up to 5 inches of rain in June and some wetlands retained water. Virtually all temporary and seasonal wetlands in the rest of the district were or went dry in 1989. Only Type V's provided waterfowl habitat.

Late summer and early fall warm and windy days proceeded to blow dirt from fallow and set-a-side farm fields. CRP grass plantings done in 1988 and 1989 are for the most part short on grass/legume and long on thistle/kochia. Many pastures ran out of water and or grass and cattlemen were forced to sell down their herds. Many crops were either cut for forage due to lack of seed heads or simply left standing waiting for the crop insurance adjuster.

As I write this it is now late January and it's 40 degrees above with no snow cover. Again this year it's difficult to tell whether this is late fall or early spring, but its sure not a classic N.D. winter.

The outlook is dismal. Because of dry soil conditions there is little frost seal to allow any hoped for snowfall to run-off into wetland basins. Any moisture received will immediately soak in where it falls. Only the hope of a tremendously large amount of March/April snowfall remains.

Climate Summary for 1989

Month	Temp. Min.	Temp. Max.	Precip.
Jan.	-25	40	0.19
Feb.	-30	40	0.16
Mar.	-15	55	0.47
April	13	85	2.17
May	21	84	2.00
June	53	93	1.55
July	56	100	1.59
Aug.	41	99	1.42
Sept.	25	96	0.50
Oct.	14	90	0.34
Nov.	-5	63	0.40
Dec.	-33	53	0.26
TOTAL			11.67



During 1988 and 1989 wetlands disappeared in the dry winds like "prairie smoke".

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C. LAND ACQUISITION

1. Fee Title

Field evaluations were conducted on 15 BLM tracts during 1989. The tracts were ranked by WMD priority and then by statewide priority. The FWS will pursue the transfer of 5,000 acres of BLM tracts statewide. Of the 5,000 acres to be transferred all 15 tracts located in the WMD were recommended. This includes five tracts totally 320.0 acres in McLean County, seven tracts totalling 306.8 acres in Sheridan County and three tracts totalling 120.0 acres in Ward County.

During 1989 the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) transferred a 334.5 acre tract to the FWS as the John's Lake WPA. The SBA had foreclosed on the tract and had been unable to sell it. The tract will make an average WPA. The former landowner received agricultural use through harvest of 1989. In November the FWS seeded the 130 acres of former cropland to DNC. The remainder of the tract is wetland and native prairie.

Following the successful transfer of the John's Lake WPA a second tract of 80.0 acres located in Ward County which will make an excellent WPA is scheduled (hopefully) for transfer in 1990 from the SBA.

Several fee acquisition requests were received in 1989. Most fell through for one reason or another. At years end only the Fetzer tract in NE Sheridan County and the Ryckman tract in McLean County are being pursued.

2. Easements

Thirteen easements were evaluated, recommended, and purchased in 1989 protecting an additional 955 acres of privately owned wetlands. This brings the total protected in the WMD to 78,634 privately owned wetland acres.



Without the protection of a wetland easement wetlands may be level ditched like this one in Ward County. 11/20/89 39-MWG

3. Other

Work began in earnest this year on the establishment of conservation easements on FmHA properties. A total of six properties totalling 9,388 acres were identified in Audubon Complex to receive some type of easement. Easement restrictions are of various degree, but generally protect existing sod and trees, restore wetland, protect existing wetland from draining, burning, filling or other mechanized agricultural uses unless the FWS has issued a use permit, and provides for a grassland buffer strip around each wetland. The easements require extensive surveying and the marking of grassland and wetland boundaries with signs and magnetic markers. Future enforcement of the easements which will attach to the deed and transfer to future owners will be the responsibility of the FWS. A copy of a typical easement is included as an example following the summary table.

Tract	Total Acres	Wetland Basins	Wetland Acres	Buffer Zones	Buffer Acres	Flood plain Acres	Grass- land Acres	Tree/ Brush Acres
Kreller	1650.0	138	120.9	111	164.1	0	0	0
Traxel	840.0	0	0	0	0	0	152.7	0
Bosch	1720.0	3	3.7	2	4.2	593.8	273.9	0
Jepson	2502.0	0	0	0	0	0	2404.0	0
Robinson	1716.0	0	0	0	0	0	1322.0	0
Blees	960.0	1	42.0	0	0	0	196.5	0
Totals	9388.0	142	166.6	113	168.3	593.8	4349.1	0



Work began this year on surveying and marking FmHA conservation easements with signs and magnetic markers. 9/21/89 33-RA

Hipp	Peninsula Cut-off	1	65
Meier	Access to the Hipp Cut-off	1	
Edinger	Idle Nesting Cover	1	225
Freborg	Construct Pair Ponds	20	<1
Streifel	Grazing System	1	160
Klain	Grazing System	1	320
Anamoose	Nest Structure Erection		
Wildlife Club	and Maintenance	60	N/A
McClusky	Nest Structure Erection		
Sportsmens Club	and Maintenance	30	N/A
McClusky	Provide and Install		
Sportsmens Club	Nest Bales	100	N/A
Fetzer	Idle Nesting Cover	1	103
Bohara	Private Fill for Island	1	1



Efforts continued this year to install ditch plugs and restore drained wetlands. A total of 51 basins were restored. 89-27 RA

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In addition we provided 27 four legged nesting structures, 15 goose tubs, 25 duck baskets, and approximately 65 nesting bales to landowners in the WMD. Three of the private islands that were covered under a 1988 agreement were trapped this year to remove predators.



11/15/89 TDK



Duane and Craig ready to deliver another load of nesting bales (top photo) and 4-legged nesting structures (bottom photo)

3/23/89 23-MWG

1985 Farm Bill

Potential swampbuster and sodbuster violations found during routine duties are reported to the respective County ASCS offices. In addition, the FWS serves as an advisor in commenced determination decisions. Producers do not officially violate swampbuster rules until a program crop is planted and thus can still drain wetlands and plant them to grass or alfalfa without penalty. 1989 work is broken down into three categories - commencement hearings, reported swampbuster violations and reported sodbuster violations.

Commencement Determination Hearings

County	Name	Commencement Determinations (ASCS)	FWS Concur
Sheridan	Erickson	No	Yes
McLean	Dockter	Yes	Yes
McLean	Sayler	Yes	Yes
McLean	Novodvorsky	Yes	Yes
McLean	Severance	Yes	Yes
Hettinger	Kessel	Yes	Yes
Ward	Marshall	Yes	No
Ward	Schaefer	Yes	No
Ward	Novodvorsky	Yes	No
Ward	Petry	Pending	Pending
Sheridan	Tessman	Yes	No
Sheridan	Erickson	Yes	No

Reported Swampbuster Violations

County	Wetlands Converted	Conversion Activity
McLean	1-III	Ditch
Ward	2-III	Ditch
	2-IV	Ditch
Mercer	1-III	Fill
McLean	4-III	Prior Conversion
McLean	4-?	All Clean-outs
Sheridan	8-?	All Clean-outs
Ward	1-?	All Clean-outs

No sodbuster violations were reported in 1989.

Several potential swampbuster violations reported in 1988 were handled as minimal effects by ASCS when the landowners closed the drainage ditch. One landowner in Ward County refused to close the drainage ditch and is planning on planting alfalfa to avoid losing his farm bill benefits.

One particularly complicated and time consuming commencement determination occurred in the Sheridan County Tessman case. The case resulted in our recommending denial on three wetlands that Sheridan ASCS granted commencement. Initially, Tessman submitted a "shopping list" for drainage on portions of 10 sections of land, including 79 wetlands, on 43 of which no drainage had begun. ASCS advised that these were not elibible. Then Tessman regrouped and requested to continue drainage on about 51 wetlands. Virtually all of these were given partially converted (Wd) determinations (the producer can "cleanout" the ditches to the original depth only).



As long as program crops are not planted private wetlands can continue to be drained under the swampbuster legislation. 11/21/89 38-MWG