

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY'S RESTORATION WORKING GROUP

May 2001 Newsletter

Edited by Steve Windels

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The Indiana Grand Kankakee Marsh Restoration Project: A Case Study of a Partnership through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan

By Jeff Kiefer

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The signing of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) in 1986 between the United States and Canada set in motion a process that in just 15 years has significantly altered the North American landscape for the benefit of waterfowl and other wetland-dependent wildlife species. Conceived during the midst of a long-term drought in the prairie pothole region that saw duck populations plummet to record lows, the NAWMP had a goal of restoring waterfowl populations to levels observed during the 1970s. While abundant rainfall in the prairies during the late 1990s has certainly been a major factor in the rebound of duck populations, the contributions of NAWMP projects, as well as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and other conservation efforts, cannot be overlooked as being instrumental in the scale and swiftness of the turnaround.

The backbone of the plan was the identification of "Joint Ventures", or geographic areas of importance to waterfowl, which would be the focus of habitat restoration and protection efforts. Even before the term "partnership" became a household word, the Joint Venture concept recognized the need to leverage dollars from many different organizations to accomplish mutual objectives.

The passage of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) by Congress in 1989 provided

the impetus for partnerships to form and prepare proposals for federal funding for restoration projects. The partnership and Joint Venture concepts have proven highly successful, with more than 1,000 partners involved in nearly 800 projects in the U.S. and Canada, securing NAWCA grants totaling \$340 million and partner contributions of nearly \$800 million. This has resulted in the acquisition, restoration, and enhancement of more than 4.6 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands.

But what do these NAWMP partnerships look like, and how do they function? Although there are a wide variety of approaches and styles, a common thread runs through the most successful partnerships which takes into account the personalities and needs of the individual partners. In other words, for these large-scale, multi-organization restoration efforts to be successful, the human dimensions aspects often become as important as the technical expertise.

While Indiana was somewhat late at getting into the NAWCA process, there nevertheless have been some impressive partnerships put together since the mid-1990's. There are currently 3 active large-scale projects operating within the state, bringing in more than \$8 million in NAWCA funds matched by nearly \$30 million in partner funds. The following is a synopsis of the workings of one of those efforts, The Indiana Grand Kankakee Marsh Restoration Project in northwest Indiana.

History of the Kankakee Marsh

About 150 years ago, the Grand Kankakee Marsh was one of the premier wetland ecosystems in North America. Comprising fully 15% of the state's wetland acreage, the vast wetland complex along the Kankakee River stretched for nearly 1 million acres across northwest Indiana, and included emergent marsh, wet prairie, sedge meadow, scrub-scrub, and floodplain forest communities. Interspersed were islands of black oak savanna and upland prairie, which also dominated the sand dunes along the southern fringe of the marsh. From its source near South Bend, Indiana to the Illinois state line, the Kankakee River meandered some 250 miles through 2,000 bends, with an average fall of only 5 inches per mile.

This provided a rich mosaic of habitat for a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal species, for which the marsh became legendary. Accounts from the late 1800's describe barrels of frog legs, wagonloads of pelts, and railroad cars of game bound for the Chicago markets. Particularly abundant were waterfowl and other wetland game birds, which brought sport and market hunters alike from around the world to partake of the rich assemblage. The marsh, however, was viewed as having other, more tangible economic benefits. Beginning in the mid-1800's, efforts to drain the marsh began in earnest, and by the early part of the 20th century, the river was deepened and channelized, reducing its length in Indiana from 250 miles to less than 85. The resulting combination of drainage and pumping converted the majority of the landscape to intensive row crop production, which for the most part remains to the present time.

However, significant remnants still remain, mostly as publicly held areas scattered throughout the basin, from the 19,000-acre Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie near Joliet, Illinois on the west to the 4,000-acre Potato Creek State Park near South Bend, Indiana on the east. Examples include the Kankakee State FWA, with extensive greentree reservoir areas and large concentrations of waterfowl, and the Jasper-Pulaski State FWA, which supports up to 100% of the eastern population of greater sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis*) during migration. On the Illinois side, the relatively unaltered reach of the

Kankakee River beginning at the state line meanders much like it did a century and a half ago, with shrub swamps and floodplain forests still dominating the corridor. The Kankakee River basin is home to a wide variety of threatened and endangered species, including the federally endangered Mitchell's satyr butterfly (*Neonympha mitchellii mitchellii*) and Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), and the federal candidate eastern

massasauga (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*). In addition, more than 200 state-listed species inhabit the Kankakee basin, most of which are dependent upon prairie, savanna, or wetland habitats.

Kankakee NAWMP Begins

Despite the extensive alteration and agricultural development, flooding and poor drainage make farming difficult in many areas, and numerous restoration opportunities exist within the watershed, both within the floodplain and in the upper reaches of the basin. Over the years, there have been many attempts by conservationists to try to bring back portions of the marsh. But it was not until the NAWMP provided the impetus for the development of large-scale partnerships that things began to happen, and eventually led to the development of the Indiana Grand Kankakee Marsh Restoration Project (IGKMRP). The IGKMRP is located within the Upper Mississippi River/Great Lakes Joint Venture Area, and represents a primary area of waterfowl breeding and migration in Indiana (Castrale et al. 1998, Mumford and Keller 1984). Strong local support from conservationists and local, state, and federal agencies provided the foundation for establishing a Steering Committee in 1994 to prepare a NAWCA funding proposal. Among the factors critical to the project getting off the ground, 3 stand out as being of primary importance: 1) building a diverse partnership of dedicated individuals, with matching funds to bring to the table; 2) selecting an effective and nonpartisan Steering Committee Chair; and 3) developing a locally driven vision or goal that was ambitious, realistic, and would make all partners feel that they had a stake in the outcome.

The initial goal of the IGKMRP was to acquire, restore, and enhance at least 26,500 acres of wetland and associated upland in the Kankakee basin over a 10-year period. Although this only represents about 1% of the 1.9 million-acre watershed within Indiana, the conservation strategy was to attempt to link existing protected areas together, especially along the Kankakee River corridor, to establish a network of protected and managed lands for wildlife.

The initial grant application for \$1.5 million had 16 partners from a diverse array of backgrounds, who brought \$2.4 million in matching funds to the project. One of the key partners in this application was the Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO [now NiSource]), which donated 640 acres next to their Shaffer Generating Station near Wheatfield to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Having a significant business component in the proposal had much to do with the initial success of the project, and resulted in considerable media exposure and promotion through news conferences and press releases at the NiSource headquarters. Additional promotion was provided through 2 videos produced free of charge by Primetime Cable Ads, a media company partner of the IGKMRP.

The project has now grown to more than 25 funding partners, representing the gamut of local, state, and federal agencies, private conservation organizations, corporations and small businesses, as well as individuals. With such a diverse makeup of partners having varied goals and objectives, it might be

expected that there would be some difficulty in getting much accomplished. Though at times there have been some spirited discussions over priorities, the combination of the common vision and sideboards provided by the NAWMP, and the willingness of the partnership to accommodate the needs of all the members, has led to a very successful collaborative effort. Decisions are made democratically, with each funding partner having a vote; however, the emphasis on the overlapping interests and goals of the partnership result in a decision-making process that more closely resembles consensus building. The benefits of this type of partnership are many, including multiplication of resources, better efficiency with

less duplication, improved communication and understanding, innovative solutions to problems, and increased support for continued funding (Management Institute for Environment and Business 1993).

However, the bottom line is the accomplishment of the intended objectives, and in that respect the IGKMRP has been quite successful. Currently, the project is in the 3rd Phase of a projected 5-phase effort, and has acquired nearly 8,300 acres, restored more than 3,000 acres, and enhanced nearly 3,300 acres of wetland and associated upland. A total of \$3.5 million in NAWCA funds has been matched with more than \$9 million in non-federal partner funds through Phase 3. Many of the acquisitions have served to enlarge existing protected areas as well as provide corridors to link managed areas together. Land is owned and managed by a variety of partners, including the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, Lake and St. Joseph County Parks Departments, Waterfowl USA, and the Kankakee River Basin Commission.

Acquired and restored habitats are quite varied, including ditch- or tile-drained depressional wetlands, shrub-scrub habitats, shallow impoundments, tallgrass prairie, oak savanna, and poorly drained floodplain areas that provide reforestation potential and enhancement of floodwater storage. Approximately 65% of the acquired acreage was drained wetland (mostly marginal farmland subject to drainage and flooding problems) or existing wetland, with the remainder being wetland-associated upland with significant restoration potential for waterfowl nesting. Approximately 50% of the acquired acres were within the Kankakee River corridor, slightly more than the 40% anticipated at the beginning of the project.

Many of these sites continue to be actively managed by partner organizations as well to maximize waterfowl and other wetland wildlife benefits, in addition to providing opportunities for wildlife-associated recreation. Examples include moist soil management for waterfowl and shorebirds, and prescribed burning for prairie and savanna habitats.

Among the more unique properties to receive funding assistance from the IGKMRP is the Kankakee Sands acquisition in 1996 by the Indiana Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. This 7,200 acre tract of poorly drained farmland, comprising part of the former basin of Beaver Lake, at one time Indiana's largest inland lake, provides an opportunity unprecedented in Indiana to restore one of the largest wetland and grassland systems east of the Mississippi River, and is the largest ecosystem restoration project ever undertaken by TNC. When completed, this grassland/wetland complex will tie together more than 13,000 acres of existing State and privately protected land to form a block of sufficient size (>20,000 acres) to influence waterfowl and grassland-dependent migratory birds at a landscape level scale.

Wildlife Response

Although no systematic studies have been done to evaluate waterfowl and other wildlife use on all completed habitat projects in the IGKMRP, some evaluations have been done that show promising results. Data collected in 1995 at Hog Marsh in Lake County, IN identified 12 waterfowl species utilizing the newly restored wetland (Miller and Ruwaldt 1995), and anecdotal information from local ornithologists indicated that moist soil units associated with Hog Marsh provided some of the highest quality migrant shorebird habitat in northern Indiana.

IGKMRP sites have also demonstrated the importance of wetland restoration to local waterfowl production in northern Indiana. Survey data on restored wetlands in northeast Indiana, which were similar to many in the Kankakee watershed, estimated breeding pair densities of mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*), and wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*) at 0.8 pairs/wetland acre (Dubowy and Hartman 1994).

An avian survey of the Tom Sporre Wildlife Area, also in Lake County, four years after restoration from marginal farmland, found a total of 88 bird species using the 80 acre restored wetland and prairie, including 15 waterfowl species and 10 state-listed species, including nesting marsh wrens (*Cistothorus palustris*) (Gonzalez 1999). One of the project's more recent partners, the Dunes-Calumet Audubon Society, will be monitoring bird use of restored sites using standardized field methods to determine changes in habitat suitability over time and as a response to various management practices.

A New Refuge is Proposed

In part due to the successes of the IGKMRP, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service initiated an effort in 1996 to establish a new national wildlife refuge in the Kankakee watershed in Indiana and Illinois, which was officially approved in 1999 as the Grand Kankakee Marsh NWR (USFWS 1999). GIS data layers from the Indiana and Illinois Gap Analysis Programs were used to identify important focus areas within the basin, and C-plan reserve design software will be utilized to identify high priority parcels within focus areas for acquisition based on resource values and ownership boundaries (Clark and Slusher 2000). Once fully implemented, the 30,000-acre Grand Kankakee Marsh NWR will complement the IGKMRP by further linking protected areas and restoring key habitats for the overall conservation of biodiversity.

The Future

The successes achieved by the IGKMRP to date have kept the interest high among the partnership, and with the recent increase in NAWCA funding, opportunities for additional grant funds look optimistic. This is not to say, however, that there have been no setbacks. The recently approved national wildlife refuge has generated substantial controversy among local agricultural interests, who have also expressed opposition to the IGKMRP. In fact, 2 counties in the basin recently passed resolutions prohibiting governmental agencies and even private conservation organizations from acquiring agricultural land for the purpose of restoring wetlands. While it is unclear whether these resolutions will stand up to legal challenges, it nevertheless underscores the difficulties in conducting large-scale restoration efforts in primarily agricultural landscapes.

Despite these challenges, the commitment and dedication of the Steering Committee members remains strong, and the partnership continues to grow. Recognition of partners has also helped to foster motivation, as exemplified most recently by the selection of Steering Committee Chair Dick Blythe as co-winner of the USFWS's National Wetland Conservation Award to the Private Sector for 2000, presented to him last summer by USFWS Director Jamie Rappaport Clark in Washington, D.C.

The IGKMRP has been successful not only because of the on-the-ground accomplishments, but also from the improved cooperation and understanding between partners who have not traditionally been sitting around the same table. While this factor is difficult to measure quantitatively, it nevertheless provides tangible benefits that will be realized over time. Finally, despite the primary focus on waterfowl, the IGKMRP has demonstrated that the NAWMP and the partnerships that it fosters are just as much about ecosystem restoration as they are about the conservation of waterfowl habitat.

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INFORMATION EXCHANGE UPDATE - Steve Windels, Newsletter Editor

Newsletter

Once again the newsletter is slow in coming. Our plans to post the newsletter on the web site changed when our efforts to have a web site up by this spring fell through. However, we still hope to have the web site before our next newsletter comes out (see below).

As I have before here in this space, I want to stress that all members of the working group are encouraged to submit articles, notes, announcements, information inquiries, or photos for upcoming newsletters. A tentative schedule for newsletter publication can be found below, with deadlines for receipt of submissions.

Web Site

Unfortunately, our plans to have a operational web site by this spring failed at the last minute. In order to assure that we can get a web site going soon, we will be contracting someone to design and manage a web site for our working group. We are currently talking with the people who designed and manage the Western Section of TWS's web site. More information will be available soon. If you have ideas or comments please call (906-485-1352) or email (skwindel@mtu.edu) Steve Windels, Chair of the Communications Committee for the RWG.

Listserv

The working group listserv remains in operation, though admittedly little used. If you had paid member dues for 2000 and provided TWS with an email address, you were automatically signed up for the listserv. If you want to be added to the listserv or be removed, please send an email to Julie McClafferty (jfine@vt.edu). Postings can be made to the listserv at **RWG@listserv.vt.edu**. For now, the list remains closed to non-Working Group members. We hope it proves to be useful as a quick and easy way to disseminate and exchange information among members.

REGIONAL NOTES

NORTHEAST SECTION – JEFFREY KIEFER

Restoring Topographic Diversity in Altered Wetlands

Over the past several years, there has been growing interest in incorporating minor topographic modifications into the design of wetland restoration projects, a practice more recently termed “micro or macrotopography restoration”. The intent of the practice is to restore a diversity of hydrologic regimes to sites that have been topographically altered, often in floodplains of rivers and streams that have been channelized or leved, thereby removing the natural ability of the stream to modify the landscape through its meanderings and flood pulses. At other sites, land leveling has occurred, often in conjunction with channelization, drainage, and levee construction, creating a homogeneous, rather tamed floodplain for agricultural production. Micro and macrotopographic restorations would seek to restore the heterogeneous features of the former floodplains, without removing the flood control levees and subjecting neighboring properties to increased flooding.

In their most simplistic form, macrotopographic features would include “ridge and swale” type complexes with the “swale” portions ranging up to 30” in depth, and the “ridge” mounds rising up to 2-3’ in height. Together, these areas would form temporary or seasonal wetlands with a few weeks to several months of inundation, with adjacent areas of upland. Microtopographic features would be similar but with much less depth and relief, usually up to 6”, and therefore would result in more ephemeral wetland conditions. Shapes can vary from regular or irregular “potholes” to meandering swales that would mimic the historic actions of floodwaters. Often, micro and macrotopographic features would be used in conjunction to maximize the diversity of a site, and for the purposes of simplicity and clarity, can both be referred to under the term macrotopography.

In recent months, there has been widespread use of macrotopography throughout the United States (especially in the Southeast and Midwest) on lands enrolled in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) under permanent conservation easements. Many of these sites are similar to the aforementioned floodplain areas, and could benefit from the increased topographic diversity resulting from the incorporation of macrotopographic features. Among the intended benefits include: 1) the production of aquatic invertebrates of importance as forage to shorebirds and waterfowl, 2) the development of ephemeral basins to enhance reproductive habitat for herptiles, and 3) the establishment of a diversity of wetland types in close proximity with varying hydroperiods, thereby providing a wetland complex of benefit to many wetland-dependent plant and animal species.

Macrotopographic features are usually planned on sites with low-permeability soils or high water tables. Levees with water control structures are sometimes used, whereas on other sites excavation is used to create macrotopographic features. Typically, these features would cover approximately 30-50% of a site, and would be located in such a manner as to take advantage of any existing variation in topography. Other techniques include random borrowing for fill material, rough-finish grading, and the introduction of woody debris.

Due to the relatively recent use of this practice on a widespread basis in the WRP, there has been little research into the wildlife use and productivity of these types of restoration projects. I would be curious to hear from anyone with experience using these techniques or studying these restorations as to what’s worked, what hasn’t worked, and what kind of vegetation and wildlife responses you have seen. The Indiana NRCS office recently created a technical note on this subject entitled, “Using Micro and Macrotopography in Wetland Restoration”. For those interested, it’s available on their web site at www.in.nrcs.usda.gov, then

follow the links to Planning & Technology and then Biology. You can also view it directly from the Farm Bill Network web site at www.wl.fb-net.org/In-final.pdf.

- **Jeffrey Kiefer**, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 620 S. Walker Street, Bloomington, IN 47403; Ph: (812) 334-4261, Ext. 212. Email: Jeffrey_Kiefer@fws.gov

SOUTHEAST SECTION - SARA SCHWEITZER

Hello from your Southeast Region Representative. It is great to be associated with colleagues with like-minded objectives and a means of sharing ideas through the Restoration Working Group. I didn't get a note into the last newsletter as I was preoccupied with getting the feature article selected, edited, and submitted on time. I look forward to each region's featured article.

The Southeast has numerous ecological regions supporting great biodiversity. Simultaneously, the region is experiencing significant growth from human development. Fortunately, many citizens and their legislators are beginning to understand the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems. Restoration efforts in the Everglades, the Mississippi Alluvial Valley, longleaf pine and wiregrass systems, and in coastal marshes demonstrate the collaborative efforts being put forth to restore valuable resources. However, there is much work to do so I look forward to reporting on current projects that involve members of the RWG.

My research has focused primarily on avian populations and their responses to habitat enhancement, and I've taught a Graduate Seminar on Restoration Ecology. I've been at the University of Georgia for six years and am an Associate Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Management in the School of Forest Resources. I've been involved with the Georgia Chapter of TWS (President Elect and President) and the UGA Student Chapter of TWS (co-faculty advisor). I look forward to being more active in the Restoration Working Group and welcome ideas and information from Southeast Region RWG members about restoration projects, techniques, and experiences to share through this newsletter.

- **Sara H. Schweitzer**, D. B. Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602; Email: schweitz@smokey.forestry.uga.edu. Ph: 706/542-1150

WEST REGION - MICHAEL L. MORRISON

Having just assumed duties as Western Representative to the WG, I have been busy encouraging colleagues to join, and gathering information on restoration activities in the region. The former endeavor is meeting with a fair amount of success, judged by the favorable responses I have been receiving. The latter endeavor is rather overwhelming given the number of restoration projects in the West. I want to highlight several recent meetings that included a good dose of restoration presentations.

The Western Section of TWS annual meeting was held this February in Sacramento. We registered nearly 1000 attendees, by far the largest gathering in the Section's history. Numerous papers included a restoration component, and an entire daylong session was devoted to "Habitat restoration and management". A total of 15 papers were presented, including works being conducted in the Great Basin, desert dunes, wetlands, agricultural lands, and so on. One recommendation I have is that the WG prepare brochures that describe the WG and provide an easy means of joining. It would be easy to display these brochures at Section and Chapter meetings.

Co-sponsored by the Western Section, a meeting (also in Sacramento) was just completed on riparian ecology. Attended by over 500 people, a major focus was on restoration of riparian areas. I presented a paper

on our work along the lower Colorado River, and numerous other presentations were made on riparian habitat restoration, tools for restoration and assessment, restoration of river processes, responses of various vertebrate groups to restoration, and so forth. Here again was an excellent opportunity for the WG to advertise its presence (we need literature to hand out!).

I also heard from several individuals who are now joining the WG. For example, Jeffrey Kelly (USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station) is working on the Rio Grande Bosque to develop a management prescription that protects the remaining cottonwood from catastrophic fire. Luke George (Humboldt State University) is looking at alternative approaches, using different combinations of silviculture and fire, to restoring late-seral stage structure to forests. CalTrans (California Department of Transportation) is now funding studies that monitor wildlife response to their restoration activities. They realize that simply planting vegetation does not necessarily enhance a location for target wildlife species. This activity will have a major impact in California given the extensive roadway development.

I would like to get brief (1 paragraph) descriptions of wildlife-restoration projects from members of the WG in the West. Also, please let me know (send me email addresses) of people that I can encourage joining the WG (and, of course, TWS). Thanks and I look forward to hearing from you and developing a more informative report for the spring.

- **Michael L. Morrison**, Assoc. Research Scientist, White Mountain Research Station (Univ. of California), PO Box 816, Bishop, CA 93515. Ph: 760-873-1148. Email: michael.morrison@verizon.net

Upcoming Meetings

Society of Wetland Scientists Sponsored Meeting

“Changing Wetlands: new developments in wetland science”

University of Sheffield, England

Sept 11 -13, 2001:

Society of Wetland Scientists 22nd Annual Meeting

Chicago, Illinois

May 27 - June 1, 2001

<http://www.sws.org/chicago/>

8th Annual The Wildlife Society Conference

Reno/Lake Tahoe, Nevada

September 25-29, 2001

Email: tws@wildlife.org

SER-International Conference

“Restoration Across Borders”

Niagara Falls, Ontario

October 4-6, 2001

<http://www.shaf.ac.uk/geography/wetlands/>

Field Trip Planned for 2001 Working Group Meeting in Reno

Starting with the 8th Annual TWS meeting in Reno/Lake Tahoe, September 25-29 2001, the Restoration Working Group will be hosting a field trip to tour local restoration projects in conjunction with our annual business meeting. David Ross, a Restoration Biologist with the Klamath Basin Ecosystem Restoration Office of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has arranged for us to visit two sites on the afternoon of September 29:

1) Truckee River: Restoration of the Cottonwood Riparian Corridor. The Nature Conservancy.

Chad Gourley will discuss the hydrologic functioning and water diversion issues pertaining to restoring the riparian cottonwood community. Dr. Elisabeth Ammon will discuss the major issues related to wildlife populations, primarily neotropical migrants.

2) Restoration of Sagebrush Communities following Wildfire. Bureau of Land Management.

The sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) community has re-established itself naturally on some nearby BLM lands. Large-scale burns during drought years are a big problem in the Great Basin as natural re-seeding of sagebrush takes a long time.

NOTE: there is also a Sagebrush Restoration Symposium being held in conjunction with the TWS meeting in Reno.

Specific times and travel arrangements for the tours will be forthcoming.

We hope to see all Restoration Working Group members there!