



Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

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<http://dnr.state.il.us>

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

Date: June 1, 2004

To: Kathy Barker

From: Joe Kath 

RE: Wildlife Preservation Fund: "A Plan for the Recovery of the Greater Prairie-Chicken in Illinois" - IDNR technical document published in 2004.

With the publication and printing of the above referenced document, please note that this project is now complete. The invoice dated March 30, 2004 from Phillips Brothers Printers in the amount of \$2,777.00 shall serve as the final invoice/expenditure for this project. A total of 1,000 copies of the Prairie Chicken Recovery Plan (PCRP) were printed and will be available for distribution to both public and private conservation partners across North America, Canada, and Mexico.

The following invoices/payments were recently prepared and submitted as part of this project:

1. Payment of \$840.75 to Donna's House of Type (Springfield, Illinois) for typesetting and layout of the formal IDNR PCRP including: cover design, map clean-ups/edits, reviewer's alterations, reformatting with larger font, preparation of proofs and final burn to CD for use by printer.
2. Payment of \$1,500.00 to Dr. Jeff Walk for Phase 3 of the PCRP: This payment covered all expenses (time, editing, etc.) associated with final/Phase 3 revisions to the PCRP suggested by various conservation partners across the United States.
3. Payment of \$320.00 to Daybreak Imagery (Richard and Susan Day) for the use of copyrighted digital images/photographs in the final PCRP. Front and back covers of PCRP.
4. Various payments during FY 02-04 to Dr. Jeffrey Walk for PCRP preparation - writing, editing, reviewing, etc.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any additional questions or comments you may have.

RECEIVED

JUN 01 2004

Printed on recycled and recyclable stock

FEDERAL AID

THE PUBLISHED DOCUMENT ENTITLED "A PLAN FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN IN ILLINOIS" IS AVAILABLE IN IT'S ENTIRETY FROM THE IDNR CLEARINGHOUSE.

THE CLEARINGHOUSE CAN BE CONTACTED AT (217) 785-0067.

THE ATTACHED IS AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PLAN.

A Plan for the Recovery of the Greater Prairie-Chicken in Illinois



Dr. Jeffery W. Walk

University of Illinois and the
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Office of Resource Conservation

A PLAN FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN IN ILLINOIS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Greater Prairie-Chicken, once an abundant species in Illinois, is now endangered due to loss of grassland habitat. Prairie-chickens have large home ranges and use a variety of grassland habitats throughout the year. Therefore, conservation regimes for prairie-chickens tend to encompass the needs of many prairie species that require less area or fewer habitat resources. The State of Illinois has been involved in prairie-chicken preservation for over 60 years, yet prairie-chickens have declined by >95% during that time. A comprehensive plan for ensuring the recovery and long-term preservation of this signature bird of the Illinois tallgrass prairie is necessary. **The recovery potential of the Greater Prairie-Chicken is very good, and is limited only by human motivation to provide adequate habitat.**

Greater Prairie-Chickens were abundant in the 19th century in much of central North America and throughout Illinois. Primarily due to habitat loss, populations of this species have continued to decline range-wide in the 20th century. In Illinois, a remnant population of about 150 birds persists at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area in Jasper and Marion counties. Much effort has been devoted to prairie-chicken conservation, and effective methods have been developed for monitoring populations, restoring and managing habitat, translocation, and controlling predators and nest parasites.

As a resident species, prairie-chickens require a variety of habitats throughout the year, including dense, mid-height nesting cover, weedy brood-rearing areas with abundant arthropods, tall roosting and escape cover, and foraging areas such as agricultural fields. Prairie-chickens are generally intolerant of woody vegetation and human structures. Nesting success and brood survival are the most important determinants of population growth. Prairie-chickens are well-known for the males' elaborate communal breeding displays. A few males perform the majority of copulations on a lek, and this contributes to a high risk of inbreeding depression within small populations. For this and other reasons, a minimum viable population of prairie-chickens is probably >800 birds. Although prairie-chickens are quite mobile, they are not migratory and dispersal among populations isolated by distances >30 km (20 miles) is unlikely. Small "satellite" populations that serve as "stepping stones" to link isolated populations reduce the risk of genetic drift, stabilize population demographics, and increase effective population size by establishing a metapopulation structure.

A number of other prairie species are also *Threatened or Endangered in Illinois*, and achieving joint recovery of these species with prairie-chickens is attainable. This goal is consistent with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' "ecosystem-based management" mission. At PRSNA, prairie-chicken management has provided crucial habitat for at least 44 species of special management concern. This plan identifies 58 conservation priority species, including 23 *Endangered* and 10 *Threatened in Illinois* species, which will benefit from the actions described in this plan. The species most expected to benefit from recovery of the Greater Prairie-Chicken include the Northern Harrier, Upland Sandpiper, Barn Owl, Short-eared Owl, and Henslow's Sparrow, all of which are *Endangered in Illinois*.

The goal of this recovery plan is to preserve the remnant Greater Prairie-Chicken populations, restore and protect habitat, re-establish prairie-chickens in suitable habitat, and mon-

itor population levels to ensure the long-term viability of prairie-chickens and associated prairie wildlife in Illinois. Four objectives, with tasks for completion, have been developed:

OBJECTIVE 1. Ensure the long-term preservation of the remnant Greater Prairie-Chicken populations at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area. Population criteria for this objective include >1,000 birds for 5 years.

Task 1. Establish and protect an additional 1,050 ha (2,600 acres) of grassland habitat at PRSNA in Jasper County and an additional 1,540 ha (3,800 acres) of grassland habitat at PRSNA in Marion County.

Task 2. Develop adequate equipment and staff to establish and manage lands administered as PRSNA. This task is to be completed concurrently with Task 1.

Task 3. Increase synergy of protected grassland and adjacent lands by developing cooperative agreements and incentive programs for private landowners.

Task 4. Establish grassland habitat at satellite locations through cooperative agreements, conservation easements, private land incentives, and/or land acquisition.

Task 5. Develop a program for monitoring prairie-chickens and other species at PRSNA. This task is to be completed concurrently with previously identified tasks.

Task 6. Develop wildlife viewing opportunities, outreach and conservation education programs, adequate visitor facilities, and other public uses compatible with the objectives of this plan at PRSNA. This task is to be completed concurrently with previously identified tasks.

Task 7. Classify the remnant prairie-chicken populations as secure when the habitat and population criteria for Objective 1 have been met. Translocations may be required to achieve security of the genetically and demographically constrained remnant populations.

OBJECTIVE 2. Downlist the Greater Prairie-Chicken to *Threatened in Illinois*, when the population is no longer in danger of extinction in Illinois. For this objective, >3,000 birds in 3 or more populations for 5 years are required. Progress on Objective 2 can be made after Objective 1 is met by completing Tasks 1 through 7.

Task 8. When Objective 1 is met, three categories of prairie-chicken habitat must be evaluated for promoting the next stage of recovery:

- A. Opportunities for expanding available habitat at PRSNA.
- B. Protecting and enhancing habitat naturally colonized by prairie-chickens during successful completion of Objective 1.
- C. Translocation of prairie-chickens into existing, unoccupied grassland habitat unlikely to be colonized by natural dispersal.

Task 9. Develop habitat to support, and then establish additional significant prairie-chicken populations.

Task 10. Establish or enhance additional habitat for existing prairie-chicken populations to allow total population size to meet or exceed criteria for completing Objective 2.

Task 11. Downlist the Greater Prairie-Chicken from *Endangered in Illinois* to *Threatened in Illinois* when habitat and population criteria for Objective 2 have been met.

OBJECTIVE 3. Recovery of the Greater Prairie-Chicken in Illinois is complete when the species is delisted and not likely to become endangered in Illinois in the foreseeable future. Population criteria for recovery are >5,000 birds in 5 or more populations for 10 years. Progress on Objective 3 can be made after Objective 2 is met through completion of Tasks 8 through 11.

Task 12. When Objective 2 is met, two categories of prairie-chicken habitat must be evaluated for promoting the next stage of recovery:

- A. Opportunities for expanding available habitat at existing population locations.
- B. Translocation of prairie-chickens into existing, unoccupied grassland habitat unlikely to be colonized by natural dispersal.

Task 13. Develop habitat to support, and then establish additional significant prairie-chicken populations.

Task 14. Establish or enhance additional habitat for existing prairie-chicken populations to allow total population size to meet or exceed criteria for completing Objective 3.

Task 15. Delist the Greater Prairie-Chicken from *Threatened in Illinois* when habitat and population criteria for Objective 3 have been met.

Task 16. Monitor the recovered population of Greater Prairie-Chickens in Illinois in perpetuity. Closely regulated hunting and serving as a donor population for translocations to other states may be biologically appropriate uses of the Illinois population at this point.

OBJECTIVE 4. Achieve joint recovery of associated prairie species in Illinois, while preventing the need to list additional prairie species as *Threatened or Endangered in Illinois*, and contribute to range-wide recovery of the Greater Prairie-Chicken and prairie wildlife. Criteria for recovery of other species will vary and should be determined on a case-by-case basis. Progress on Objective 4 should be made concurrently with meeting Objectives 1, 2 and 3, but should not delay accomplishment of these objectives.

Task 17. Evaluate the potential for and conduct reintroductions for species of special concern onto grassland habitat established for Greater Prairie-Chicken recovery when colonization through natural dispersal is unlikely.

Task 18. Monitor responses of prairie species of special management concern on grasslands established or enhanced through prairie-chicken recovery.

Task 19. Coordinate grassland conservation efforts with other states and agencies to restore range-wide connectivity of Greater Prairie-Chicken populations, maintain integrity of donor populations necessary for translocations, and protect migratory or wide-ranging prairie species.