



PRRIP Land Update

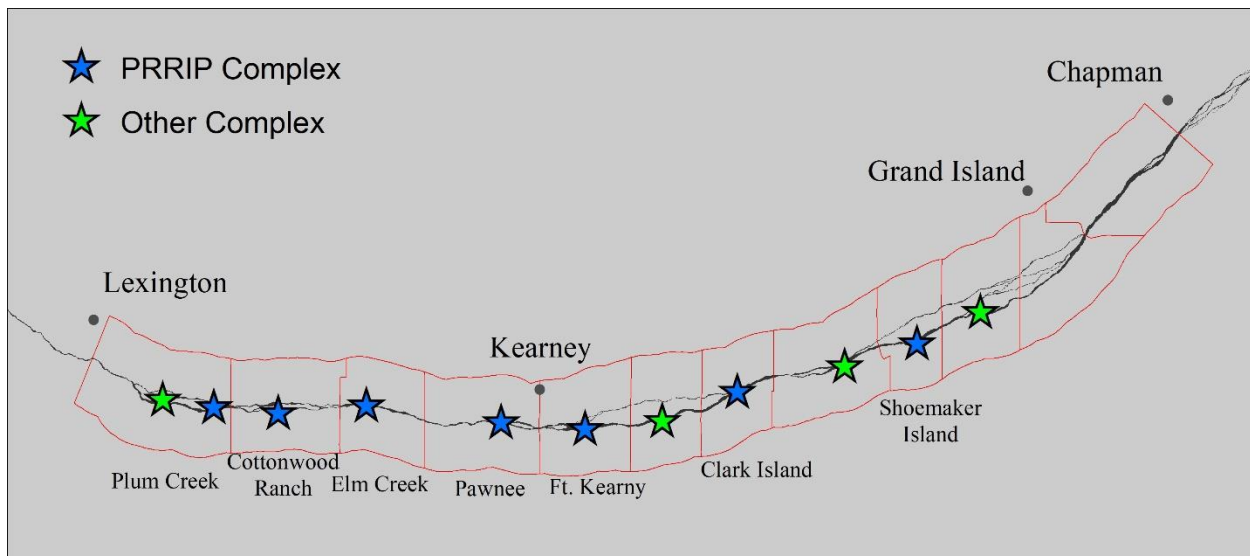
The Program has been tasked with acquiring an interest in, restoring as necessary, and managing 10,000 acres of habitat in the Program's Associated Habitat Reach (AHR) between Lexington, NE and Chapman, NE. At least 9,200 acres are to be acquired in the form of on-channel habitat (complex habitat). The remaining 800 acres are to be comprised of off-channel (non-complex) palustrine wetland habitat for whooping crane roosting and off-channel sand and water (OCSW) nesting habitat for least terns and piping plovers.

Acquisition Status:

As of October 2018, the Program has acquired an interest in 12,639 acres of habitat (see table). Slightly less than 95% of the land consists of on-channel complex habitat with the remaining acres comprised of 254 acres of non-complex palustrine wetland roosting habitat and 391 acres of non-complex OCSW nesting habitat. Approximately 87% of all acres are held in fee-title or subject to long-term leases or sponsorships. The remaining acres are comprised of management agreements that can be terminated by owners at-will. Although less secure, management agreements are an important tool for maintenance of target species habitat in reaches where the Program does not have an ownership on both sides of the channel.

Habitat Type	Purchase	Lease/Sponsorship	Management Agreement	Total
Complex	7,641	2,650	1,703	11,994
Non-Complex	630	15	0	645
Total	8,271	2,665	1,703	12,639

The Program's Land Plan indicates a preference towards development of one habitat complex in each bridge segment. A total of seven habitat complexes have been developed during the First Increment. In accordance with Land Plan guidance, the majority are in the upstream (west) half of the AHR, the segment with the least amount of previously-protected habitat and most in need of restoration. Clark Island is the Program's newest complex, which is being built around an 800-acre tract acquired in January of 2018. Other organizations own and manage four additional habitat complexes in the AHR. The two remaining bridge segments without complexes are located at the eastern edge of the AHR.





The Program also owns two non-complex palustrine wetland tracts at the upstream end of the AHR, owns five OCSW sites distributed throughout the AHR, and leases an additional OCSW site adjacent to the City of Kearney. In 2016, the Governance Committee (GC) voted to acquire enough land to construct an additional 60 acres of OCSW nesting habitat. That decision, in combination with the scarcity of palustrine wetlands in the AHR, led the GC to recommend that remaining non-complex acres be used to acquire lands for OCSW sites.

Restoration and Management Status:

Complex habitat restoration and management is focused on providing highly-suitable whooping crane roosting habitat. Based on recent habitat selection analyses, channels with unobstructed widths of approximately 700 feet and unforested widths of approximately 1,000 ft are highly suitable for roosting. Major restoration activities have been completed at all habitat complexes. Where possible, riparian forest has been cleared to create a total of 1,000 ft of unforested width adjacent to the channel. Channel widening has also been implemented at upstream complexes to create suitably-wide channels. In reaches where active widening is not feasible, the Program is removing vegetation from banks and bars to encourage widening via lateral erosion.

Restoration activities at the two non-complex palustrine wetland sites have been completed and the sites are being managed to provide suitable water depths and vegetation heights for whooping crane roosting. Likewise, restoration activities have been completed at all OCSW sites and management is ongoing. In addition, two of the sites are actively being mined in a way that will increase the amount of suitable nesting habitat through time. We



anticipate that mining operations at one site will be completed next year (see figure). Mining will likely continue at the second site for several more years.

Future Activities:

The Program will begin a 13-year First Increment Extension in 2020. Although the Land Objective will not change during the Extension, Program participants have agreed to acquire an additional 1,500 acres of complex habitat with the intent of establishing a new complex in a bridge segment that currently lacks protected habitat. Acquisition efforts will likely focus on the segment of channel between Grand Island and Chapman as the segment adjacent to Grand Island is space-limited and contains many potential disturbance features.

The Program is also working to identify alternatives for development of the additional 60 acres of OCSW habitat. EDO investigations of existing sandpits indicate limited opportunity to acquire and restore suitable nesting habitat at existing sites. Other options include development of habitat via mining activities on Program lands, a very slow process, or mechanical creation of habitat, which is expensive but



69 can be completed quickly. The EDO is currently assessing the feasibility of mechanically-constructing
70 OCSW habitat on excess cropland acres included in the Clark Island purchase.