

PLAN FOR MINNESOTA FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

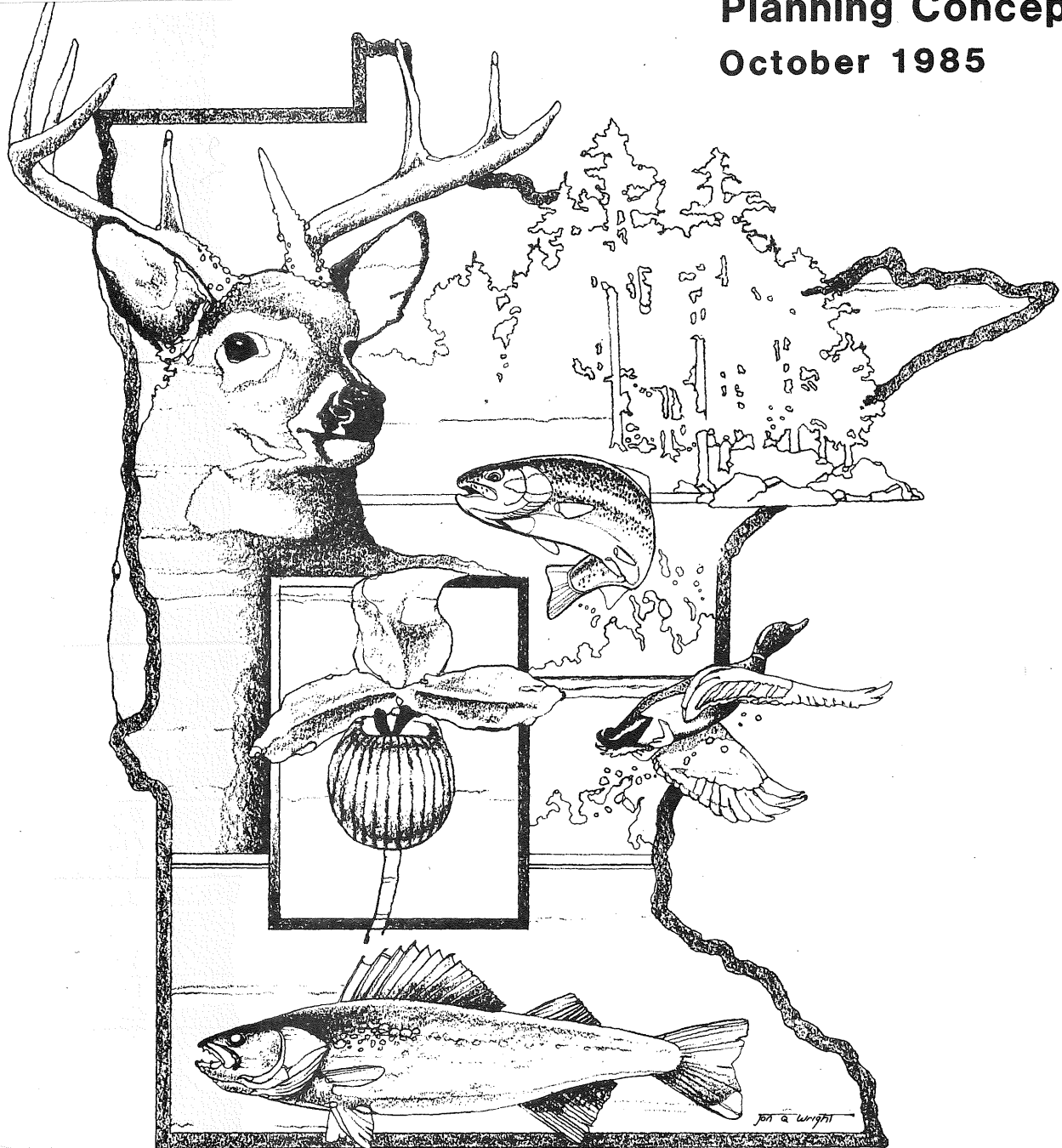
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PREFACE

Fish and wildlife management planning in Minnesota has been primarily short term and geared to the biennial budget cycle. Increased demands on our state fish and wildlife resource require that we look beyond our traditional way of doing business. To this end, comprehensive planning is essential.

This new planning process allows us to determine in advance what needs to be done, alternative ways to do it, when to do it and identifies who is responsible for getting it done. Input from the public and a variety of other sources will be an integral part of our information gathering technique. In short, we need to do a better job of identifying our needs and developing the necessary programs to meet those needs, including development of an adequate funding base.

The Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR) is playing an important role in getting our comprehensive planning efforts started. The Commission provided funds for FY 86-87 to launch these efforts. Additional funding is being provided through the Division's regular budget appropriations.

Larry R. Shannon, Director
Division of Fish and Wildlife

Introduction

During the 50 year history of the Department of Natural Resources, major social and environmental changes have occurred in Minnesota which impact every citizen. Increased human population and an expanding economy based on agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, minerals and tourism have literally changed the social fabric and face of the state.

Fish, wildlife and native plant populations have also been affected by these changes. The key to fish and wildlife abundance is habitat. Where habitat has been negatively impacted, these resources have declined. Lost habitat must be restored and the quality of existing habitat improved if ever-increasing demands for fish and wildlife related recreation are to be met. Increasing user demand and a decreasing habitat base are major threats to fish and wildlife populations. Unless adequately preserved and managed, habitat and fish and wildlife populations will not be sufficient to sustain the demands placed on them by society.

The quality of life in Minnesota is represented in many ways but one of special interest to most Minnesotan's is their opportunity for hunting, fishing, and observing wildlife and native flora. While fish and wildlife resources benefit and are enjoyed by the majority of residents and visitors, those who purchase licenses and special stamps provide most of the support for fish and wildlife programs. Hunters and anglers, however, are no longer able to fully fund essential management activities on a continuous basis. Without adequate funding for fish and wildlife management there will be further loss of quality of life for Minnesotans.

Minnesota relies on a thriving tourism industry. An attempt is being made to increase tourism by expanded marketing of the state's outdoor recre-

ational opportunities. The outdoor recreation related tourist dollar is estimated to be a billion dollars and ranks with other major state industries in economic impact. The industries' cornerstone is natural resources: lakes, rivers, clean air, fish, wildlife and a beautiful, varied landscape. Heavy public demand for these resources is causing user conflicts and creating problems that need to be dealt with if tourism is to remain a viable contributor to the state's economy.

Modern society is changing rapidly. With every change there are opportunities as well as threats. By anticipating changes, identifying problems and modifying programs to meet challenges, threats can be dealt with and opportunities used to advantage. Agencies caught in the crisis management trap consistently miss opportunities and are forced to react to the threats created by a changing world. Crisis management can be avoided through proper planning.

Planning has been carried out as an integral part of operations by the Division of Fish and Wildlife for many years. The Section of Wildlife has management plans for nongame wildlife, scientific and natural areas, deer, moose, turkey, waterfowl, and the timber wolf. The Section of Fisheries prepares individual lake and stream management plans and an annual statewide work plan. The Section of Ecological Services also carries out short term planning based on the biennial budget cycle. Except for the nongame wildlife plan, none of these plans are comprehensive in nature.

This report introduces a new comprehensive planning concept in the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The concept includes strategic, long range and operational planning. The process and its products will make management programs more responsive to public and resource management needs. The steps for this process are outlined in this document and may change in response to departmental and public involvement.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this comprehensive planning system is to improve the protection and management of the state fish and wildlife resource. This will benefit the resource and protect the public interest by ensuring protection and safe utilization now and for future generations. It will also provide a sound basis for a vigorous tourism industry.

The planning effort will encompass a broad range of factors that impact fish and wildlife resources. This approach will require the participation and active cooperation of other divisions and bureaus within the Department of Natural Resources, other governmental agencies, private organizations and the general public. While the Department has extensive authority over fish and wildlife populations, control of fish and wildlife habitat is shared with other agencies and private landowners.

Objectives

The objectives of the comprehensive planning process are as follows:

- To describe the mission of the Division of Fish and Wildlife;
- To identify and define important resource related issues;
- To define supplies and demands for particular resources;
- To set goals, objectives, identify measures of effectiveness and provide direction for solving problems;
- To improve the existing data base and collect new data to aid in decision making;
- To develop a range of alternatives and strategies related to issues, long range goals and objectives;
- To provide the policies and framework for work planning and agency operations;
- To integrate biennial work plans and budgets with strategic and long range plans;
- To accurately account for money spent, work done and progress towards objectives;
- To evaluate the Division's effectiveness in meeting objectives;
- To analyze funding, manpower, equipment and land needed to achieve objectives;
- Systematically update strategic and long range plans;
- To enlist the assistance of other agencies and the public in resolving resource problems and
- To actively involve the public in the planning process.

Planning Process

Present planning carried out in the Division is largely short term and keyed to the biennial budget cycle. This type of planning is primarily sensitive to short term concerns and lacks long range vision.

In contrast, comprehensive planning is anticipative and oriented toward identification and solution of long term resource problems. Stated simply it asks the four questions: Where are we? Where do we want to be? How will we get there? Did we make it? The planning process and schedule are shown in Figure 1.

The plan to plan is the first step in the process and is the subject of this volume. It describes and organizes the planning process.

The Strategic Plan will be a short document about the future, about change and about the Department's and the Division's roles in managing fish and wildlife resources. It will describe the Division's mission, responsibilities and regulatory authority, management philosophy and the direction the Department and Division will move in the next 15-20 years. The Strategic Plan will also present the major issues affecting the Division's business. These issues will be identified through interaction between Division and Department personnel, other agencies and the public. The strategies chosen to address issues will provide overall direction to the Long Range Plan.

The Long Range Plan will cover a 6-year period and is based on the Strategic Plan. Given the direction set by the Strategic Plan, the Long Range Plan will include management objectives, problems and operational tactics with a regional perspective. Each chapter of the plan will focus on a species, community or program and describe relevant history, resource supply, public demand, policy considerations, goals, objectives, issues and strategies. It will require input from area managers and will be written by a committee of

regional staff, central staff, area staff, planning staff and research personnel. It will serve as the basis for operational planning.

Operational planning will implement the Strategic and Long Range Plans by developing work plans and projects designed to address the problems and achieve the objectives in the Long Range Plan. Work plans will cover all aspects of a field manager's time and be developed by the individuals responsible for conducting the actual work. Operational planning will link long range objectives and work plans to a budget developed by the field manager/supervisor and regional supervisor with direct managerial guidance.

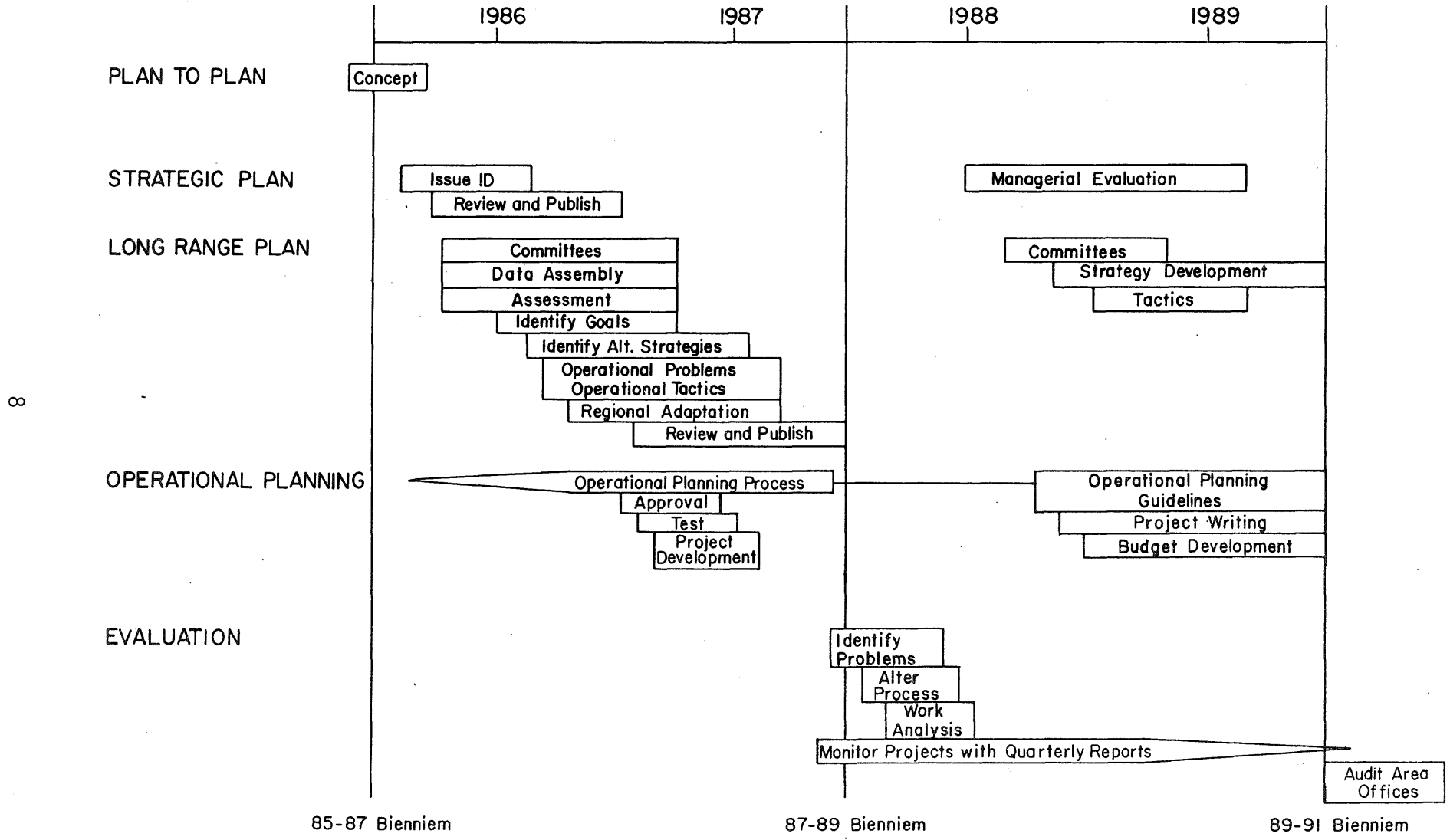
Evaluation of the planning process and resultant work plans will be carried out systematically. Each time the evaluated planning process is repeated the plans and programs will become more successful and usable. Evaluations of the results of work plans will be carried out through audits and work completion reports. Measurable outputs will be used to evaluate progress towards both operational and long range objectives.

The planning process will be facilitated by the planning team in the Section of Ecological Services. Consultants will assist as needed. Departmental involvement will include designated representatives from each Division or Bureau assigned to assist the Division's planning team identify conflicts, issues or strategies and review or prepare plan documents. Formal departmental review will be conducted by the Planning and Environmental Review Team (PERT).

A highly participative process will function within the Division. Teams of field people will write chapters of the Long Range Plan. During the period of the Strategic Plan development, workshops will be conducted with field personnel to identify issues, obstacles, practical alternatives and strategies.

Figure 1

PLANNING PROCESS AND OPERATIONAL SCHEDULE



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will also be involved in the planning process. The Service has recognized the progress the states have made in restoration, management, development and conservation of fish and wildlife and in the administration of these functions since the original passage of the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts. New concepts embodied in the passage of P.L. 91-503, which allows the states to obtain federal funds on the basis of approved comprehensive plans, were based in part on the recognition of the states progress towards management of all fish and wildlife resources and the administration of their agencies. Further recognition of this progress was through the passage of P.L. 96-366 (Forsythe-Chafee Act) encouraging states to develop conservation plans for all fish and wildlife, particularly nongame wildlife which Minnesota has completed. Thus Minnesota has several options for planning and funding fish and wildlife management activities. The option selected determines the administrative roles of the Service and the state involved in the Federal Aid Program.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3, will review and comment on the comprehensive planning system. The Service is providing expertise and cost sharing for planning consultation.

The planning documents will be forwarded to the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources.

Public Involvement

Public participation and involvement will be an important aspect of the planning process. Working meetings will be conducted across the state with the public, license holders and interest groups to incorporate their hopes, concerns, special interests and perceived problems into the strategic plan document. These nominal group meetings will be held in December 1985. An additional purpose of the meetings is to help the Division identify groups or individuals potentially affected by the plan so that they may participate in plan development.

A record of citizen input and of the agencies responses will be maintained throughout the planning process. This responsiveness survey will be an open record of citizen participation. A toll free telephone line and a departmental ombudsman will also be provided to facilitate communication. The Division has already alerted daily newspapers, wire services, television stations and other media of the planning initiative. News releases, public forums, open houses, public meetings, and the Volunteer magazine will be used as needed to keep affected groups and individuals involved and informed as planning progresses.

Established communication lines will be used for public participation to a large extent. This network includes contacts with conservation organizations, resource protection organizations, businesses, civic organizations and the public. The Institute for Participatory Management and Planning is currently assisting the planning team in developing a public involvement program.

The reports will be distributed through communications channels to all groups or individuals who are interested in the plan and program development.

Summary

This volume explains the process selected by the Department of Natural Resources for comprehensive fish and wildlife planning. It also describes why, when and how such planning will be integrated with other resource management activities within the Department and how the public will be involved.

Comprehensive planning includes the development of strategic, long range and operational plans. The comprehensive plan will provide direction to the Division of Fish and Wildlife. State legislators will be able to use the plan as a guide for the evaluation of agency budgets and drafting legislation. Other divisions will use it to coordinate their management with that of the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will use the plan to review Minnesota's role in national fish and wildlife restoration. Finally, the public will use it to obtain information about the Division's progress towards maintaining and enhancing their quality of life.

The intent in implementing this process is to make resource management programs more responsive to public desires, resource needs, new management information and guidance from the legislature and the governor.

The schedule is to update the strategic and long range plans every six years and redevelop the operational plans every other year in phase with the state's biennial budget cycle. Evaluation of work accomplishments will be compared to planned direction and mid-course corrections made as needed. In this way, work programs will stay in touch with Minnesota's changing economic, social, political, biological and institutional conditions.

The planning process will be documented by publishing a strategic plan in March, 1986 and a long range plan by June, 1987. These plans will receive internal and external review by all major parties having an interest in Minnesota's fish and wildlife resources. They will become the guide for fish and wildlife protection and management, Department budget requests and performance reviews.

