

SETTING GOALS & CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVES



Some landowners have very clear ideas about what they want to do with their land. Most, however, have vague goals or no goals at all. In some cases landowners are not aware of the range of opportunities available to them. Once they become aware, they may begin to change their plans. The process of decision making includes understanding what trade-offs will occur, what constraints certain actions may place on the land, what is realistically possible on the land, and what commitments of time and cost are involved. The more knowledgeable a landowner becomes, the more realistic the landowner's goals often become. Therefore, clear, well-defined goals, are necessary for a successful plan.

A goal is essentially what you want to do with your land, a wish to be fulfilled. Although setting goals may seem like a simple process, it is often complex and constantly chang-

ing. Planning and goal setting is a continual process in which the results of your first decisions influence all management options. Your goals will often overlap, and do not necessarily need to be seen as mutually exclusive. In other words, it is possible for your property to be managed to enhance conservation, provide recreational enjoyment, and produce income at the same time. This chapter will focus on how to set goals, how to accomplish these goals, and what to consider when creating a feasible management plan.

Setting Goals

To create management goals for your land, begin by making a list of what you value about your property and how it may be valuable to others. These values will reflect what you expect from your land, and essentially your prospective goals. Try to prioritize the goals from what you think is most important to least important. Arranging your goals by priority, and reviewing them periodically, will help you to plan the step-by-step process toward achieving them. Don't worry if you don't know. Simply listing your views may help you to think about what you know and don't know about your property and what it can--or cannot do--to satisfy your interests.

The land's capabilities define the limits of management possibilities. Thus, the goals that you set will depend on your property and the surrounding landscape. You will also need to know the habitat requirements and life history of the wildlife

GOALS TO CONSIDER

Conservation Goals

- Stop erosion
- Restore wetlands, grasslands, or forestlands
- Create windbreaks
- Promote habitat diversity
- Manage for the greatest variety of wildlife species or for rare species
- Increase the health of the landscape

Recreation Goals

- Increase one or more species for hunting
- Increase wildlife viewing opportunities
- Enhance aesthetic value
- Create nature trails for hiking

Economic Goals

- Timber and firewood harvesting, which may improve habitat for squirrels
- Farm and graze, which may enhance grassland birds
- Allow access to others such as hunters or tourists
- Create conservation easements to save tax dollars
- Enroll in state and federal conservation programs

Social Goals

- Leave something behind for family/society
- Leaving land "better" than you found it
- Improve environment for others
- Make the land aesthetically pleasing

LIMITATIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What possibilities of attracting wildlife does my land have?
2. To what degree could I manipulate my land to attract more wildlife?
3. What possibilities do the adjoining properties have for attracting wildlife?
4. Will my goals enhance or detract from those possibilities?
5. What trade-off associated with my management goals may occur?
6. Do I have the time and the financial resources to carry out the goals I have set?

you intend to manage. Once you determine what you will need to support the species you desire to attract, you must determine if the habitat is there, if it can be created there, and if you could sustain it there. For example, it is not possible to manage for species that require hardwood forests if you have no hardwoods on your property. In addition to this, you must also determine what limiting factors are there, the carrying capacities of your land, and what trade-offs are involved. For such information on the specific needs of wildlife, see the chapters in the **Species Management** section.

Considering your neighbors is another important aspect of determining goals. It is possible to manage for larger areas if you and your neighbors have similar goals and can combine management efforts. For example, if both you and your neighbor want to attract a large diversity of woodland birds, you could create a management plan that incorporates both properties.

Because other activities conducted on your land will also affect wildlife, you should try to anticipate those effects when making your management goals. When improving habitat for wildlife, you can usually combine wildlife management with timber management and agricultural practices. However, for best results, you may need to modify these practices to benefit wildlife. In most cases, timber and farming activities help some wildlife species but may harm others. You will need some understanding of these effects if your management goals are to be realistic. As a general rule, for example, timber harvest benefits deer, rabbits, grouse, and certain songbirds such as towhees and indigo buntings, that get food and cover from low-growing plants. On the other hand, some forms of timber harvest can harm forest wildlife species like barred owls or woodpeckers that use den cavities, or squirrels and turkeys that rely on mast-producing hardwoods. The degree of management practiced

BEFORE SETTING YOUR GOALS, THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING . . .

1. Does wildlife use your property to connect other habitat nearby?
2. Do your woods, for example, stand-alone or do they form the core of a large forested area owned by your neighbors?
3. Is restoring a wetland going to flood your neighbor's land?
4. How is your neighbor managing his/her land?
5. Would your neighbor(s) be interested in managing their land cooperatively with you?
6. Have significant alterations been made to the land surrounding your property?
7. Would these changes affect your ability to succeed with your goals?

and any tradeoffs in timber, agriculture, or wildlife values will be your decision.

Try to be realistic about the time involved in carrying out your plans. Consider low-cost, low-maintenance projects and think in terms of the many shorter steps required to achieve a long-range goal.

Objectives

A landowner who has evaluated the land, identified their goals, and determined which goal is the most feasible and important, can then determine what objectives are required to achieve this goal. Writing objectives is a way of turning your ideas, or goals, into tangible strategies. One way of determining your objectives is to decide what important elements are missing from the land. In other words, ask what features can be enhanced, and always consider what is feasible on the land. For example, during evaluation of the land, you sighted several grassland birds. It was determined, from information gained on the habitat components needed by grassland birds, that your land only provides winter cover, and not nesting habitat or a reliable food source. Because having grassland birds was an important goal in this instance, an objective to achieve this goal would be to consider the creation of year-round habitat. In other words, in finding what your objectives are, you must determine what is needed to fulfill your goal.

Actions

Once the objectives required to achieve the goal are determined, the actions needed to fulfill the objectives must be decided. Actions are what are needed to obtain your objectives. For example, an action to help fulfill the objective mentioned

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above (to maintain year-round habitat for grassland birds) would be to plant vegetation that would provide nesting cover and a food source. This action would take care of an objective that was needed to fulfill your goal. Once you are at this level, fulfilling one action at a time will break up a seemingly overwhelming task into smaller, manageable pieces.

Creating Alternatives

Looking at alternatives to meet your goals, and perhaps even redirecting your goals may become necessary as you continually evaluate what you have in relation to what you want. There are two different times to look at alternatives. The first is before you set your management plan into action, and the second is after your plan has been implemented.

Before Implementation: Different Options

Before you implement any plan, it is wise to consider different options to achieving your goal. Sometimes these alternatives can save money, work, and time. You should not jump at the first option made available, as it may not be the best for your situation. It is best to weigh several options and choose the one that is the least expensive and takes less time, but achieves the same goal.

After Implementation: How Goals Change Over Time

Landowners whose land has changed, or who have run out of time, money, or patience may need to consider alternative goals for their Management Plan. In some cases, when property is sold or subdivided, or natural disasters such as fire or flooding occur, the plan may need a major overhaul or be completely rewritten. Furthermore, the habitats you are trying to protect or improve

for wildlife change with the seasons and the years. Expect your goals to change over time as surrounding landscapes change. When your plans finally become reality, you may notice that you have created partial habitat for wildlife species you may or may not have wanted to attract. Encouraging or discouraging the new wildlife, or getting rid of non-native nuisance plants, may mean an adjustment in your goals. Land-owners who become confused or frustrated when their goals suddenly

seem unreachable can still make a positive difference for wildlife if they learn to be flexible. Keep in mind that your road map, the management plan must be flexible in order to be successful. Even wildlife managers can not always predict what will happen when they begin to manipulate habitats.

In summary, management options are always based on the goal, but deciding what to do can be difficult at times as there are many things to consider. If you break down the process into goals, objectives, and actions, it makes it easier to determine what you are looking at in your plan, and what you need to do to get there. Some practices are more expensive and take more time than others. Considering alternatives is always wise as it may prevent problems that you might have overlooked. Remember, the management plan is never static, and your goals may need to be changed as your land or circumstances change, but there are usually many ways of obtaining your goals.

RE-EVALUATE YOUR ORIGINAL GOALS

The following 10 factors will assist you in evaluating your original goals, and should be asked before you implement your plan. Evaluating these considerations from time to time will also help you to consider alternatives that are available and to redirect goals as necessary.

1. Do I have the necessary funds to complete my management plan?
2. How much time do I have to do the work involved?
3. What kind of equipment is needed and where do I get it?
4. Can I provide the maintenance required once the goal is achieved?
5. What impacts to wildlife would my plan create?
6. How long will it take to achieve the results I want? Are there alternatives that are faster, less expensive and less time-consuming?
7. What impacts will my decisions have on my neighbors?
8. How have my neighbors' management practices affected me?
9. Will any legal implications occur as the result of my management?
10. Are there any future ramifications I can reasonably expect?



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GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

This is an example of how to outline goals, objectives, and actions based on the habitat types outlined on the base map within the Evaluating the land chapter.

Goal: To attract pheasants and other grassland birds

Objective one: Create year round food source

Action one: leave corn stubble

Action two: plant fruit producing shrubs

Action three: plant cool season grasses and clovers

Action four: plant warm season grasses and forbs

Objective two: Create travel corridors

Action one: plant shrubs

Objective three: Create winter cover

Action one: plant switchgrass

Action two: plant warm season grasses and forbs

Objective four: Create nesting and brood rearing habitat

Action one: plant cool season grasses and clovers

Objective five: Create artificial nesting sites

Action one: build and place nest boxes

FOR ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS CONTACT:

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Private Land Partnerships: This partnership was formed between both private and public organizations in order to address private lands wildlife issues. Individuals share resources, information, and expertise. This landowner's guide has been a combined effort between these groups working towards one goal: Natural Resources Education. We hope this manual provides you with the knowledge and the motivation to make positive changes for our environment.

FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE: CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT