

Conservation Delivery Network Strategic Project Planning

Goal: Identify the broad suite of conservation opportunities and actions that will allow the CDN partnership to target, prioritize, and accomplish our shared goals on-the-ground.

As the first Conservation Delivery Network, the AR MAV CDN has already accomplished a great deal in the arena of delivery planning. The Delivery Prioritization Tool (DPT), developed during our first year, is being used both within and outside the CDN as a tool to help define and translate the landscape scale habitat restoration and protection priorities of our partnership (attached). In addition, the enhanced coordination and collaboration fostered through the CDN has served to support the development of proposals for a number of funded projects in the AR MAV, as well as to stimulate local collaboration on numerous ongoing conservation efforts.

In order for the CDN to continue moving forward, it is necessary that we further focus our efforts to develop and refine our delivery objectives. The DPT is exceptionally useful in translating our landscape scale priorities into useful targets. However, in order to effectively capitalize our collaborative efforts and to zero in on funding opportunities that support our objectives, the partnership must now as a logical next step, focus its delivery planning efforts on defining site specific project opportunities that mesh with the broader objectives that form the basis for our landscape scale priorities.

The purpose of this document is to both outline the need to further refine our “strategic delivery planning”, as well as to offer some general project concepts, ideas, and/or opportunities that will serve to stimulate the development of project-specific list by your conservation organization.

In the near future, representatives from each of the various CDN partner organizations will meet to compile a list of CDN project opportunities. In advance of that meeting, the CDN Steering Committee is requesting that your organization begin the important work of developing a list of project-specific objectives. The vision here is not to limit the development of your list to only a narrow set of specific priority projects (which we do want), but to also capture “what if” conservation delivery goals i.e., “if we could get the funding we’d.....”.

In identifying your priority delivery objectives, we also encourage you to consider site specific project needs/opportunities on both public and private land (e.g., restore a degraded wetland on a WMA or Refuge, restore hydrologic function within working Ag fields through restoration of stream morphology and/or establishment of BMP’s on public aka, coop farm land or specific private lands) and large scale project needs/opportunities (e.g., specific watershed or sub-watershed restoration such as Grubbs, land acquisition targets, critical forest management needs, or impacting a portion of a highly degraded watershed through targeted delivery of wildlife habitat focused farm Bill programs). The key point is **don’t limit your list unnecessarily, but rather, capture anything you think might be relevant**. It will be far more beneficial for the CDN to have a very long and broad list to consider and refine, than a very short one.

As you move forward with this effort, please take note of the information included in Appendix A. In our July, 2011 CDN meeting, Roger Mangham presented a draft Strategic Plan that outlined an approach to identifying, organizing and prioritizing our delivery objectives as a partnership. The Strategic Plan was adopted at that meeting as a draft, with the understanding that the Network would further refine the document in the months ahead. You may find the goals outlined under “Delivery Strategies – What the CDN Will Do”, useful to this brainstorming exercise. Note also that, in considering the draft strategic plan at that meeting, the CDN made an initial swing at considering project opportunities. Those are included at the end of the document.

Finally, a number of CDN partner organizations are participating on a team that is working to have the “Arkansas Bigwoods” designated as an America’s Great Outdoors (AGO - federal initiative) project area. We are also including the list of projects being proposed for that effort in Appendix B as additional food-for-thought as you develop a list of project needs and opportunities within your organization. The AGO list is in no way intended to be comprehensive, but only to support your consideration of the project identification effort.

Appendix A. AR MAV CDN Strategic Plan

Delivery Framework:

In 2011, a framework was developed to define the objectives of the CDN. Decisions guiding the work of the CDN are based on science and emanate from LMVJV planning, and more generally that of CDN partner organizations. The framework includes six strategic themes to guide decision-making. In brief, the CDN will:

1. Define priority areas in which to target priority work
2. Define actions and activities to deliver same
3. Identify priority projects
4. Develop collaborative project proposals to obtain necessary funding to complete priority projects
5. Encourage communication and collaboration

Vision:

The CDN will implement on-the-ground delivery projects to link with the biological goals and objectives of the LMVJV. This will improve the ecological function of forested wetlands, including water quantity and quality which supports these complex wetland systems. A functional landscape will support priority bird populations that are key to LMVJV objectives, as well as other wildlife and fisheries resources. A functional landscape will result in healthy natural resources that can be used and enjoyed by people.

To achieve this vision of the CDN, three overall goals guide the strategic thinking, planning and implementation activities of this network.

Goals of the Conservation Delivery Network:

1. Implement on-the-ground projects within the CDN-defined priority areas.
2. Coordinate the independent efforts of CDN members.
3. Leverage human resources and funding of CDN member organizations to implement on-the-ground projects that further the natural resource objectives of each independent entity and link those projects to the biological goals of the LMVJV.

Delivery Strategies – What the CDN Will Do:

To reach these goals over the next five years the CDN will target:

1. TERRESTRIAL RESTORATION
 - A. Reforestation and afforestation of non-forested lands
 - B. Restoration of bottomland hardwood forests
 - C. Restoration and creation of emergent marsh habitat
 - D. Restoration of grasslands where site appropriate
2. HYDROLOGY RESTORATION
 - A. Restoration of streams and rivers
 - B. Construction of moist-soil units
 - C. Restoration of micro-topography (i.e. ridge and swell)
 - D. Stabilization of stream banks
 - E. Restoration of floodplains
3. HABITAT MANAGEMENT
 - A. Forest stand improvement
 - B. Wetland Management
 1. Moist-soil
 2. Forested
 3. Green-tree impoundments

- 4. Emergent wetlands
- C. Grasslands

4. HABITAT PROTECTION

- A. Acquisition
- B. Fee-title
- C. Easements
- D. Donation

5. LANDOWNER OUTREACH

- A. Forest management training
- B. Wetland management training
- C. Develop demonstration sites

6. AGRICULTURAL LANDS

- A. Buffers

Projects:

In 2011, the Delivery Working Group developed a list of ten projects for the CDN to consider for development of work scopes, to encourage progress on implementation and actively pursue funding. Over the next five years, the CDN will complete at least three of these projects.

1. Dave Donaldson Black River WMA – Expansion and Enhancement of the Brookings Moist-soil Unit
2. Glaize Creek – Installation of new water control structure
3. Lower Cache River – Phase I
4. Lower Cache River – Phase II
5. Grubbs Restoration
6. Reforestation of Cache watershed through WREP
7. Bayou Meto Hydrology Restoration
8. Shirey Bay Rainey Brake WMA - Big Eddie bank stabilization
9. Dave Donaldson Black River – Restoration of bottomland hardwood ecosystem
10. Two-stage ditch demonstration project

Appendix B. Draft List of Project Opportunities for “Arkansas Big Woods” - America’s Great Outdoors Initiative

Strategic Objectives

Strategic objectives are the actions designed to achieve the strategic goals. These include projects and compiled from a variety of partners and stakeholders. Over the next seven years, partners will primarily work together in areas where individual goals and objectives overlap, but for which leads will be determined by agency (in parentheses). Short (1-3 years) and mid-term (3-7 years) objectives were identified for each Strategic Goal and organized as items to complete and items to initiate. Individually submitted partner objectives are single bulleted.

HABITAT Short-term (1-3 years)

1. Complete approval of Cache River NWR expansion area boundary by 102,000 acres (USFWS)
2. Complete approval of White River NWR expansion area boundary by 125,000 acres (USFWS)
3. Complete restoration project on the upper 3 meanders of the lower Cache River (COE/TNC)
4. Complete acquisition and restoration of 15,000 acres through WRP (NRCS)
 - a. Establish minimum 180’ wide vegetative buffers along all surface water.
5. Complete acquisition of 5,000 acres into public ownership (USFWS)
6. Initiate planning of the restoration of the lower 3 meanders of the lower Cache River (TNC)
7. Initiate watershed restoration plan of the Cache River Basin (COE)
 - a. Create a multiple-party, widely scoped Watershed Management Plan

HABITAT Mid-term (3-7 years)

1. Complete restoration of the lower 3 meanders of the lower Cache River (TNC)
2. Complete acquisition and restoration of 40,000 acres through conservation easements or long-term agreements (NRCS/USFWS)
3. Complete acquisition and restoration of 35,000 acres of public land (USFWS)
4. Complete White River Comprehensive Study (COE)
5. Complete 10 additional stream restoration projects (TNC/NRCS)
6. Initiate implementation of the watershed management plan in the upper Cache River watershed (COE)
 - a. Alleviate Grubbs Blockage on Cache River with a multi-partner approach that provides flood relief for landowners while adequately mitigating negative impacts to ecosystem

AGRICULTURE Short-term (1-3 years)

1. Complete enrollment of 10% of eligible cropland into conservation programs (NRCS)
 - a. Develop conservation plans for 75% of the farms in the designated watersheds.
 - b. Obtain funds to implement conservation plans, and implement the plans.
2. Complete restoration of 20,000 acres of public forestland into desired condition for wildlife (USFWS)
 - a. Plan, implement, and /or complete silvicultural treatments and reforestation to enhance forest habitat according to DFCs - 5,000 acres on Cache River NWR and 15,000 acres on White River NWR
 - b. Implement at least one grassland/prairie restoration/demonstration project on Cache River NWR and on White River NWR;
3. Complete restoration of 30,000 acres of farmland to desired condition for wildlife (NRCS/TNC/USFWS)
 - a. Implement 25 new Partners for Fish and Wildlife projects;
 - b. 5 Additional stream restoration project in conjunction with NRCS

AGRICULTURE Mid-term (3-7 years)

1. Complete enrollment of 30% of eligible cropland into conservation programs (NRCS)
2. Complete restoration of 50,000 acres of public forestland for desired condition for wildlife (USFWS)
3. Complete restoration of 60,000 acres of farmland to desired habitat condition for wildlife (NRCS/TNC/USFWS)

HYDROLOGY Short-term (1-3 years)

1. Complete reduction of on-farm, consumptive water use by 5% using irrigation efficiency practices (NRCS)
2. Complete the inclusion of ecological flows for the Cache River and Bayou DeView into the Arkansas State Water Plan (TNC)

- a. ensuring positive flow regimes.
- 3. Initiate a plan for sustainable flood risk management that supports food security (COE)
 - a. Resolve dredge spoil deposition issue on White River NWR through land exchange with USACE;
 - b. Control encroachment of human activities into the existing floodplain
- 4. Initiate a collaborative water quality monitoring program for the project area rivers to prioritize sub-watershed sediment issues (TNC)
 - a. Obtain extensive water quality information in the area to identify the watersheds needing the greatest treatment.
 - b. Measurably improve water quality in Cache and White River.
 - c. Through water quality monitoring, be able to detect water quality improvements.
 - d. Reduce in-stream sediment loading that encumbers both adequate flow hydraulics, increases risk from flooding, and increases maintenance costs.
- 5. Initiate the increase of annual, seasonal flooding of agricultural lands for wildlife habitat by 10% (DU)

HYDROLOGY Mid-term (3-7 yrs)

- 1. Complete reduction of on-farm, consumptive water use by 15% using irrigation efficiency practices (NRCS)
- 2. Implement a coordinated water quality monitoring program to prioritize sub-watershed sedimentation projects (TNC)
- 3. Implement the plan for sustainable flood risk management that supports food security (COE)
 - a. Setback levees to restore historic floodplain habitat.
- 4. Complete the removal of 1 sub-watershed from the EPA list of impaired watersheds by working with ADEQ (TNC)
- 5. Initiate the increase of annual, seasonal flooding of agricultural lands for wildlife habitat by 20% (DU)

RECREATION Short-term (1-3 years)

- 1. Complete the opening of the Bayou DeView Water Trail with associated camping platforms (USFWS)
- 2. Complete increase in land available to the public by 5,000 acres (USFWS)
 - a. Explore opportunities to expand appropriate, compatible recreational opportunities on public lands;
- 3. Complete the enhancement of 4,000 acres of public wetland habitat for recreational use (AGFC/DU)
- 4. Initiate the planning of a birding trail network (AA)
- 5. Initiate the installation of 15 miles of interpretive hiking trails within the refuge system (USFWS)
- 6. Initiate the identification of public access needs (USFWS/AGFC)
 - a. Provide for public access points and public viewing areas for recreational economics.

RECREATION Mid-term (3-7 years)

- 1. Complete the addition of 35,000 acres available for public use (USFWS)
- 2. Complete additional 2,500 acres of public wetland enhancement for recreational use (DU/AGFC)
- 3. Complete the addition of 30 miles of interpretive hiking trails (USFWS)
- 4. Complete a package and market an Arkansas Delta Water Trail System (USFWS)
- 5. Complete construction of at least 3 new boat ramps on public land (AGFC)
- 6. Complete the creation and implement the marketing of a birding trail network (AA)

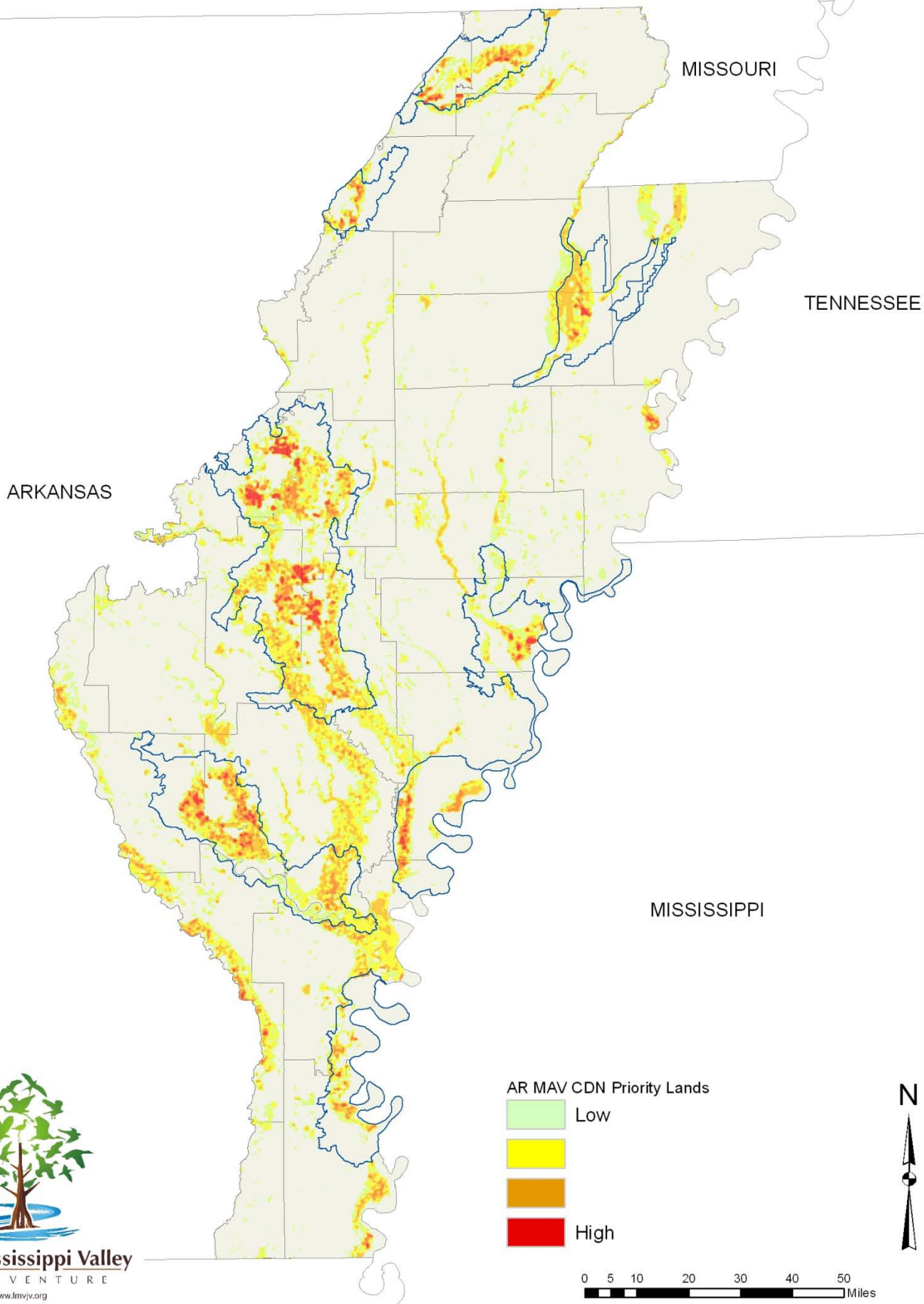
OUTREACH Short-term (1-3 years)

- 1. Complete the development of an AGO Outreach Plan (TNC)
 - a. Solidify and implement AGO working group planning/action/advocacy;
 - b. Establish "Friends" group for Cache River NWR/Big Woods (e.g., Friends of SOCNFWR model);
- 2. Complete efforts to designate portions of the project as an American Blueway (USFWS)
- 3. Initiate the documentation/report of the project's economic impact (TNC)

OUTREACH Mid-term (3-7 years)

- 1. Complete and implement an AGO Outreach Plan (TNC)
- 2. Complete and implement a designated American Blueway's benefits package (USFWS)
- 3. Initiate the development of agritourism / nature tourism training workshop (AA)
- 4. Initiate the enhancement of environmental education and interpretation programs (USFWS)

Arkansas MAV CDN Focus Areas & Prioritization Tool



Lower Mississippi Valley
JOINT VENTURE
www.lmvjv.org

0 5 10 20 30 40 50 Miles