

Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture

Progress Assessment of 2018 Operational Plan Goals & Priorities

Year 1



Lower Mississippi Valley

J O I N T V E N T U R E

www.lmvjv.org

October 2019

LMVJV Operational Plan – Year 1 Progress

The Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture (LMVJV) was formed in 1987 as a regional partnership working towards achieving the goals and objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), and now assumes responsibility for planning, designing, coordinating, and implementing conservation in support of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, and Partners in Flight Landbird Conservation Plans as well. The conservation landscape has changed (for better and worse) since the inception of the LMVJV and many challenges remain to be addressed. To facilitate a focused and efficient pursuit of shared partnership objectives, the LMVJV is guided by a 5-year Operational Plan.

The 2018 Operational Plan articulates the collective expectations of the Management Board with respect to how the LMVJV operates, interacts, and cooperates among all its parts (office staff, partners, other partnerships), and the essential expected outcomes. The primary purpose of the Plan is to ensure that the LMVJV Management Board, coordinator, office staff, and partner staff have proper context for making key (and perhaps tough) resource allocation decisions.

This document summarizes an assessment of progress after one year of work under the five-year plan.

LMVJV Operational Plan – Year 1 Progress

Organizational Performance

Priority A

Consistent, high-level engagement and involvement from Management Board members

Positives

Solid interest and participation in JV activities by most Management Board members continues. Most Management Board members continue to actively facilitate increased involvement by their organization's staff in LMVJV technical teams, etc.

Challenges

Turnover in Management Board members challenges us to share institutional knowledge, maintain a common context, and ensure continuity through time.

Kentucky Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources Board seat remains unfilled

Priority B

Consistent, high-level engagement and involvement from partner staff in technical and delivery teams

Positives

Partner staff participation in all CDNs (40-60) continues to be very high.

Participation and input provided by science-related working groups is generally high (e.g., WGCPO BHW HSI development, MAV Forest Protection Model, NETX Bird Monitoring).

Challenges

Maintaining participation and input from a wide diversity of partner interests is an ongoing challenge.

Priority C

Effective communication of LMVJV activities

Positives

Regular email updates regarding timely issues sent to Board members and partner networks, and three *News & Updates* e-newsletters distributed.

Brand new website launched in 2019.

Glossy summaries of four LMVJV Plans (MAV Waterfowl, Shorebird, WGCPO Open Pine, WGCPO Forest Wetland) completed and posted on web site.

Several partner accomplishments (e.g., acquisition, restoration) have been communicated to the partnership via *News & Updates*, owing to the provision of this information by partner organizations to JV staff

Challenges

Will need to retain communication capacity to maintain momentum.

LMVJV Operational Plan – Year 1 Progress

Organizational Performance (cont'd)

Priority D

Cultivating relationships with key DOI & USFWS decision-makers and relaying accomplishments

Positives

LMVJV Board Chair coordinated among USFWS Southwest Region JVs and USFWS Regional leadership in December 2018. The effort was successful and well received in Albuquerque.

Challenges

Maintaining regular contact with key staff for building relationships is an ongoing challenge.

Neither LMVJV Office staff nor partner staff have made substantial contact with Department level decision-makers within the past year.

Priority E

Cultivating new sources of funding for partner activities

Positives

NFWF grant to ABC provides funding for NETX HIP landowner payments (\$120K) and effects monitoring (\$30K)

Challenges

Accessing funds from sources outside of our traditional streams is an ongoing and worthwhile process that requires time, energy, and coordination.

Identifying and cultivating additional new donors to LMVJV partner efforts, while avoiding conflict with ongoing development efforts by partner organizations is a delicate process.

Priority F

Sufficient JV Office budget to support staff, travel, and activities

Positives

Migratory Bird Joint Venture (1234) funding levels remain relatively flat, in the face of reductions in other programs.

LDWF, AGFC, MDC, TWRA, NRCS, ODWC, and TPWD are contributing funds to the LMVJV Support Office to augment 1234 funds.

TPWD and DU provide office space and support to JV staff in Tyler and Ridgeland.

NFWF funds, through an award to ABC, provide approx. 50% of the WGCPO Partnership Coordinator's costs for two years

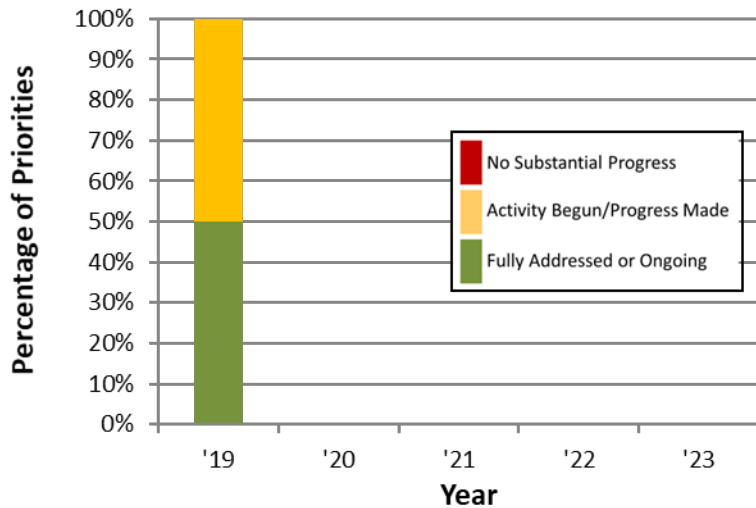
Challenges

None at this time

LMVJV Operational Plan – Year 1 Progress

Organizational Performance (cont'd)

Organizational Performance



Year 1 ('19) Priorities Status

- Board member engagement
- Partner staff engagement
- Communication of JV activities
- Communication with DOI & USFWS
- Cultivate and increase funding sources
- Sufficient Office budget to support staff

LMVJV Operational Plan – Year 1 Progress

Biological Planning

Goal 1: Landscape-oriented, biologically driven, partner vetted, up-to-date population objectives for priority species within all bird guilds in both BCRs by 2023

Highest Priority

Waterbirds of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley & West Gulf Coastal Plain/Ouachitas Plan

Positives

LMVJV staff is collecting data from partners on King Rail locations to help inform objectives.

Challenges

This effort is challenged by a lack of waterbird expertise to include in the King Rail working group, and a lack of population data to set defensible population objectives.

Highest Priority

MAV Landbird Plan Revision

Positives

Dr. Dan Twedt has finalized the update to the landbird biological model for the MAV. It will be published in USGS Open File Format. LMVJV Staff and partners will meet in late October to discuss a 'roll out' of the plan to partners.

Challenges

The current report contains a wealth of technical information, resulting in the need to determine how best to summarize, package, and disseminate the information to partners.

Highest Priority

WGCP Open Pine Plan Revision

No Progress

High

Waterfowl – New Population Objectives

Positives

New population objectives have been completed by LMVJV Science Coordinator, although not distributed to the larger Waterfowl Working Group. With the GCJV, we have agreed upon an interpretation of the dual NAWMP objectives (80th percentile vs. Long-term average).

Challenges

Timing of updating waterfowl planning has not been ideal given other priorities (such as waterbirds) and the reality of the substantial effort that it will take to update our models.

LMVJV Operational Plan – Year 1 Progress

Biological Planning (cont'd)

Medium

Multi-JV grassland bird conservation planning ("Murmuration")

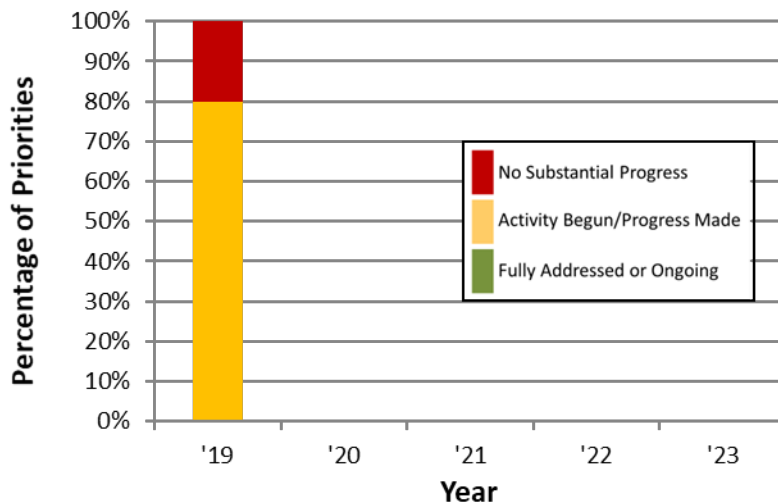
Positives

Science Coordinator participated in meeting in January 2019 to develop plan and discuss potential study sites.

Challenges

Funding to conduct field work necessary to develop Full Annual Cycle models has not been obtained.

Biological Planning



Final ('18) Priorities Status

- Waterbird Planning
- MAV Landbird Plan Revision
- WGCPD Open Pine Plan Revision
- Waterfowl Objectives Updated
- Grassland Bird Murmuration

LMVJV Operational Plan – Year 1 Progress

Conservation Design

Goal 2a: Up-to-date habitat objectives for priority species within each bird guild in both BCRs by 2023

Goal 2b: Effective decision support tools to link and integrate habitat objectives for priority species in each bird guild and other relevant resource concerns, useful for delivery action by 2023

Highest Priority

Waterbirds of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley & West Gulf Coastal Plain/Ouachitas Plan

Positives

Staff have discussed with M. Mitchell and B. Elliott creating our own data layers for palustrine emergent marsh. We are collecting existing (limited) spatial data from partners to use as 'ground truth' locations.

Challenges

Ability to accurately assess emergent marsh (rail habitat) on the landscape is difficult.

Highest Priority

WGCPO Open Pine Plan Revision

No Progress

Highest Priority

CDN Delivery Priorities updated and distributed

Positives

Both the LA/MS MAV and NETX CDNs' delivery priorities were updated in the past year, with support from LMVJV Office and Partner (TPWD) staff.

High

Waterfowl – New Population Objectives translated to habitat objectives

Positives

We have formed an LMVJV Waterfowl Working Group 'executive committee' that will discuss new population objectives and improvements to the base biological model to set habitat objectives.

Challenges

Incorporating USFWS Southeast Region objectives into existing JV framework

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Conservation Design (cont'd)

High

Human Objectives developed for waterfowl

Positives

Held discussion with WWG leadership in summer 2019 regarding the need to dig deeper into HD science, and have scheduled a meeting in November 2019 to discuss HD possibilities with HD scientists and key waterfowl biologists.

Challenges

Effort is hampered by a scarcity of expertise, and lack of direction from NAWMP.

High

Integration of priorities among guilds, ecosystem services, etc.

Positives

Soon to have solid planning/design products for all bird guilds in both BCRs.

Challenges

Developing and updating basic biological plan/design elements is staff-intensive, and occupies a higher priority than does integration.

Medium

Multi-JV grassland bird conservation planning ("Murmuration")

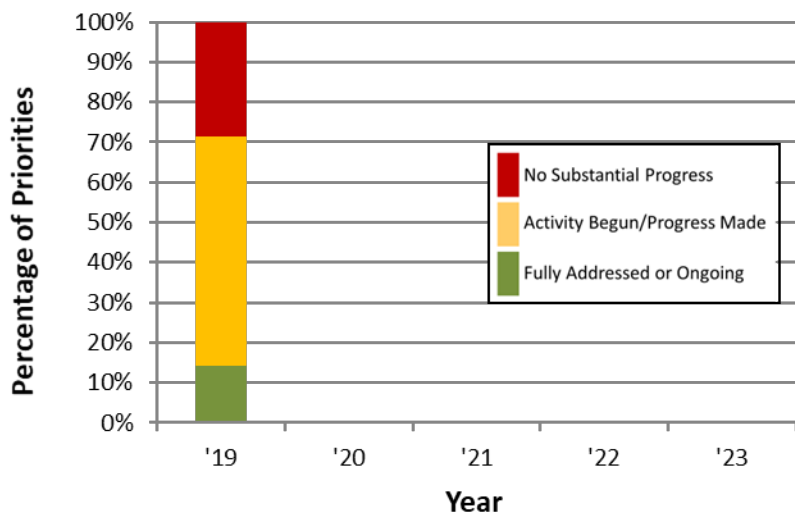
Positives

Meeting held in January to develop plan and discuss potential study sites.

Challenges

Funding to conduct field work necessary to develop Full Annual Cycle models has not been obtained.

Conservation Design



Waterbird Planning	Activity Begun/Progress Made
WGCPD Open Pine Plan Revision	No Substantial Progress
CDN Priorities	Fully Addressed or Ongoing
Waterfowl Objectives Updated	Activity Begun/Progress Made
Waterfowl Human Objectives	No Substantial Progress
Integration Among Guilds	No Substantial Progress
Grassland Bird Murmuration	Activity Begun/Progress Made

LMVJV Operational Plan – Year 1 Progress

Habitat Delivery

- Goal 3a: The Partnership actively seeks and fosters existing and emerging opportunities for coordinated habitat delivery in support of LMVJV objectives
- Goal 3b: Establish fully-functioning Conservation Delivery Networks throughout the JV, guided by LMVJV objectives by 2023
- Goal 3c: Fully supported long-term functionality and productivity of existing Conservation Delivery Networks and Tri-state Conservation Partnership

Highest Priority

Continue support of existing CDNs & Cooperatives:

- CDNs
- Tri-state Cons. Partnership
- Longleaf Partnerships

Positives

Much LMVJV Office staff and partner staff time continues to be invested in support of existing cooperatives and networks.

Conservation Delivery Networks. The AR MAV, LA-MS MAV, and NE TX CDNs continue to function well and benefit from active support of the LMVJV staff. CDN membership participation remains high, with 40-60 attendees typical at regular CDN meetings, and excellent participation in workshops and field days. As intended, these CDNs have developed and updated their priorities to address coordination and information needs unique to their geographies. As one example, CDNs in the MAV maintain active Working Ag Lands Working Groups, addressing opportunities for CDN partners to more effectively implement conservation actions in the MAV working agriculture landscape. These working groups host workshops in AR, LA, and MS, including two in 2019, aimed at improving delivery staff's knowledge and effectiveness in working with farmers. In contrast, the NE TX CDN has developed a successful private lands program (NETX Habitat Incentive Program), improving nearly 14,000 acres of private lands in three years.

The AR-LA WGCP CDN has benefited from energy injected by the new WGCP Partnership Coordinator, CDN leadership from LDWF and AGFC, and a NFWF grant awarded to Quail Forever. Although somewhat behind the other three CDNs, the AR-LA CDN's Steering Committee has met several times in 2019, and is poised to take full advantage of the CDN's power to facilitate and focus conservation in that region.

Longleaf Partnerships. JV Office staff are provide significant support to the TX Longleaf Implementation Team (TLIT), and will continue to do so until the new TLIT Coordinator is on board. JV Office staff have re-engaged with the Western Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership (WLEP) and are poised to provide for coordination and communication between the TX and LA groups. Specific details on the variety of CDN related activities are provided in annual reports to the Board.

Tri-state Conservation Partnership (TCP). The TCP continues to experience strong support and engagement from NRCS and

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associated JV partners. Much of the work of the TCP is directly supported by CDN working groups (additional details below).

Challenges

Effective communication and coordination among the moving parts requires special attention as the activities of these multiple sub-partnerships increase in number and frequency, and as partner staff composition changes over time.

High

Develop and foster unique partnership opportunities at sub-regional scale

The **Tri-state Conservation Partnership** (TCP) was initiated in 2013 and fully formalized through the JV in 2015 with a Declaration of Partnership (signatories: NRCS AR, NRCS LA, NRCS MS, & LVMJV). This unique partnership continues to evolve and strengthen, serving as an excellent mechanism for fostering engagement of LMVJV partners in support of shared delivery priorities within the MAV of AR, LA & MS. Many of the Farm Bill centered delivery priorities identified by TCP planning are effectively accomplished through CDN based working groups. In tandem with CDNs, the TCP has become an important catalyst for supporting and addressing JV delivery interests. JV Staff continue to work directly with Board member Seiss (TNC's Lower MS River Prog. Coordinator) in leading the stewardship of the TCP. Specific recent examples of the productive collaboration resulting from the TCP/CDN relationship include:

- JV Staff worked directly with R. Seiss and lead partners to develop a 2019 tri-state WREP proposal for AR, LA, and MS. The proposal requested \$30M in funding targeting 10,000 acres of BHW restoration, and was selected for funding (\$10M) in September.
- JV Staff/Seiss lead a TCP/CDN based WRE Forest Mgmt Working Group to develop a landowner guide based on the 2016 **Tool for Assessment and Treatment of Reforested Bottomland Hardwood Stand on WRE**. The brochure was developed in coordination with the NRCS and will be used to assist landowners in initially evaluating their WRE plantations and in taking appropriate action to obtain assistance. The final version was printed and released in August 2019.
- A TCP/CDN based WRE Outreach Working Group is developing multiple videos that focus on wetland management, forest management and new enrollment. The project is funded by a MS NRCS grant and will target WRE and potential WRE landowners in the MAV of AR, LA and MS. Development of the first videos is slated to begin by early Winter 2019, and targeted for completion and release in 2020.
- Seiss/JV Staff worked with DU and NRCS to develop a web-based WRE forest plantation age estimation tool designed to assist forest market leads in identifying WRE tracts that may be ready for treatment. A related workshop is planned for Spring 2020 for WRE landowners and forest market producers/suppliers. The workshop will inform participants about the process for evaluating and initiating treatment of WRE forest stands and to foster connections between landowners and forest industry.

Challenges

With ever increasing needs and demands across multiple JV priorities, the continued growth and success of the TCP does serve to intensify overall demands on JV staff capacity. No other TCP-like partnerships are in development.

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Habitat Delivery (cont'd)

Medium

Be responsive to partners' desire to develop additional CDNs

Positives

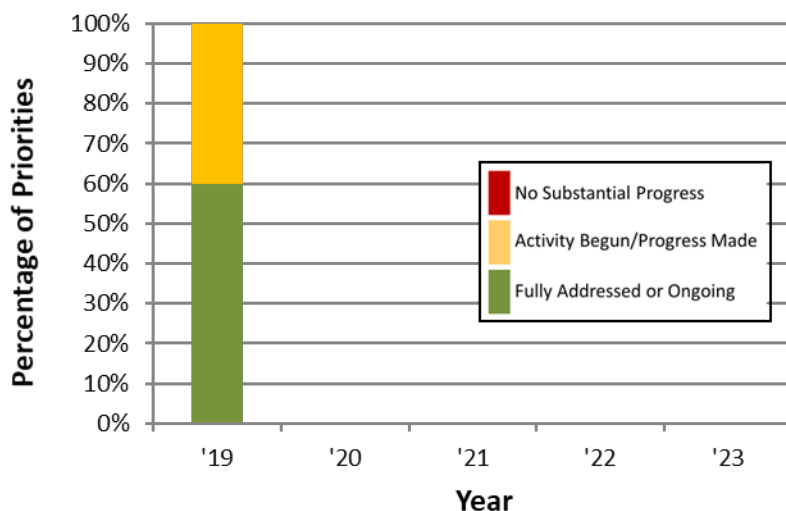
Some level of interest has been previously expressed for establishing CDNs in both the Atchafalaya Basin and the MAV of MO/KY/TN. JV staff have had exchanges with potential lead organizations in the Atchafalaya Basin in recent years but no concrete interest has been demonstrated by key JV partners to initiate CDN establishment in this area.

Energy and activity in the MO/KY/TN region picked up momentum in 2016, with ongoing discussions in 2017 among relevant Board members and key partners in the western TN/KY and eastern MO regions. Some effort has been expended in working with the EGCP JV toward developing a CDN within a larger portion of the area beyond the LMVJV/MAV region. Moving forward with such a strategy is challenged somewhat by the confluence of multiple partnership boundaries. However, focused discussions with board members representing KDWFP, MDC, TWRA, TNC, to include JV staff involvement in cross-partnership meetings and through related correspondence, has moved us somewhat closer to the possibility of forming one or more CDN or CDN-like entities in the northern tier of the MAV.

Challenges

The possibility of initiating an expanded TN/KY CDN model that includes one or more additional joint venture and locally-formed partnerships creates unique planning and collaboration challenges. There has been no movement in this direction in the past year.

Habitat Delivery



Year 1 ('19) Priorities Status

- Support to CDNs
- Support to Tri-state Conserv. Partnership
- Support to Longleaf Partnerships
- Develop & Foster Unique Opportunities
- Responsive to Additional CDNs

LMVJV Operational Plan – Year 1 Progress

Monitoring & Evaluation

Goal 4a: Develop iterative habitat and population monitoring & evaluation priorities by 2020

Goal 4b: Capitalize on opportunities for effects monitoring that support LMVJV priority habitat conservation actions

Highest Priority

Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

Positives

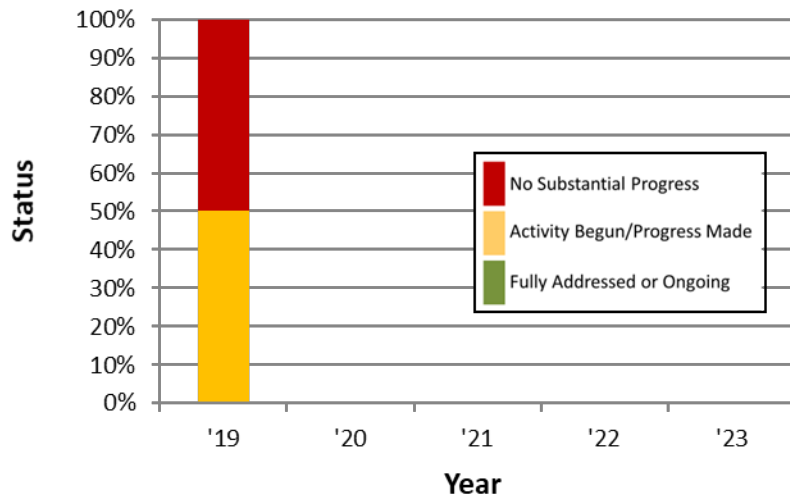
Monitoring and Evaluation Plan has been drafted and will be reviewed soon by the Science Team. A copy will be available for Management Board review and comment at the Spring 2020 meeting.

High

Pilot public use evaluation

No progress.

Monitoring & Evaluation



Year 1 ('19) Priorities Status

Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

Pilot Public Use Evaluation

LMVJV Operational Plan – Year 1 Progress

Research

Goal 5a: Update and prioritize assumption-driven research needs by 2020

Goal 5b: Active engagement by key research professionals in assumption testing and other applicable research for each bird guild and human science in both BCRs

Priority A

Actively seek opportunities to increase research funds available through and to LMVJV partners

JV staff and Science Team are working to identify priorities for research funding in the near term, and develop an approach to setting realistic priorities into the future.

Priority B

Maintain and continue to build the depth and breadth of research scientist participation in LMVJV-relevant research topics

Outreach to universities and other organizations by LMVJV Staff has continued. As JV science priorities continue to progress, and working groups are formed, further outreach will continue.

Currently working with Dr. Dan Saenz of USFS Southern Research Station (Nacogdoches, TX) on songbird response to NE Texas HIP program prescribed fire, and with Dave Holdermann (TPWD) on waterborne bird surveys for bottomland hardwood priority bird species.

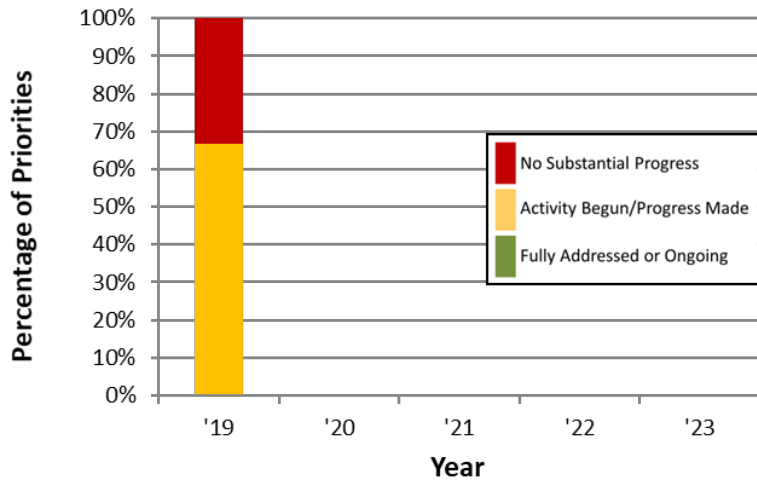
Priority C

Improve understanding of private landowner participation in conservation programs

No progress; however, discussion regarding human dimensions aspects for waterfowl should begin to shed light on this aspect.

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Research



Year 1 ('19) Priorities Status

Increase Research Funds

Build Research Scientist Participation

Understand Priv. Landowner Participation

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Communication, Education, and Outreach

Goal 6a: Address priority actions detailed in the 2014 LMVJV Communications Plan

Goal 6b: Revise/update 2014 Communications Plan as appropriate by 2023

Priority A

Effectively address
Communications Plan priority
actions

Assessment of Communications Plan priorities not currently available

Priority B

Update Communications
Plan by 2023

No progress; anticipated that contracted communications specialist
capacity will facilitate the update