



## Lower Loup Rivers

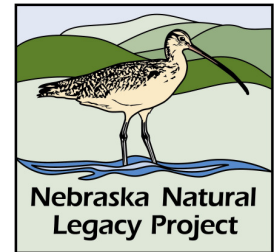
landscape includes the lower reaches of the Middle Loup River (north-central Custer County southeastward), North Loup River (southwest Garfield County southeastward), and the Loup River from its origin to the Nance/Platte county line. The landscape includes the rivers' channels and a two-mile buffer on each side of the rivers. The Loup rivers in these reaches are medium-sized with broad, braided, and somewhat shallow channels. The channels often have open sandbars and wooded islands. The flows on the North Loup River have been modified by the upstream Taylor Dam and irrigation diversions. The flows on the Middle Loup and Loup rivers have been modified by several diversions. Though somewhat modified, the Loup rivers maintain a fairly constant year-round flow of water because they receive the majority of their inputs from groundwater and little from run-off in their upper reaches.

The valley bottoms are mainly cropland, though some areas support cottonwood woodlands, wet meadows and marshes. The valley bluffs are for the most part shallow-sloped and covered by mixed-grass prairie with oak woodlands in areas.

Sandbars on the lower reaches of the Loup River support nesting colonies of the federally and state listed interior least tern and piping plover. The federally and state endangered whooping crane uses sandbars and wet meadows in the Loup floodplains as migratory stopover habitat. Bald eagles are also known to nest along the Loups. Nebraska's most extensive populations of the state threatened small white lady's-slipper occur in wet meadows in the Middle Loup River floodplain. Protected areas in this BUL include the Don Dworak, George Syas, and Leonard Koziol Wildlife Management Areas.

### Stresses Affecting Species and Habitats

- ❖ Specific livestock grazing and haying practices that may reduce native plant diversity and promote uniform habitat structure
- ❖ Invasive herbaceous plant species in sandbars, meadows and woodlands, primarily reed canary grass, European phragmites, purple loosestrife, smooth brome, and potentially garlic mustard
- ❖ Eastern red cedar and Russian olive encroachment of river sandbars, woodlands and meadows
- ❖ Additional water diversions
- ❖ Point and non-point source pollution
- ❖ Shoreline stabilization
- ❖ Drainage and sedimentation of wetlands
- ❖ Wet meadow and sand prairie conversion to cropland
- ❖ Continued cabin and home development on river banks
- ❖ Dairy and hog-confinement development



## Conservation Strategies

- ❖ Implement ecologically-sensitive grazing strategies on wet meadows on both private and public lands, in combination with prescribed fire and rest
- ❖ Develop and implement best management practices to control and manage invasive plant communities
- ❖ Implement invasive tree clearing projects on privately owned meadows, prairies and woodlands
- ❖ Implement measures to site dairy and hog confinements away from sensitive habitats and watersheds
- ❖ Coordinate with landowners interested in using conservation easements and voluntary acquisitions to protect undeveloped reaches of the river, wet meadows, and woodlands from development
- ❖ Restore and/or maintain river hydrology necessary to sustain biological diversity and ecosystem function
- ❖ Restore wetland hydrology and connect backwater habitats to the river
- ❖ Maintain stream flows and hydrology needed to meet biological and ecological conservation goals
- ❖ Interact with urban planning and zoning commissions to address development concerns

## Tier I At-risk Species

### **Plants:**

Small White Lady's-slipper<sup>3</sup>

### **Animals:**

River Otter

Plains Pocket Mouse<sup>4</sup>

Bell's Vireo

Interior Least Tern

Piping Plover

Whooping Crane

Blanding's Turtle

Ottoo Skipper

Regal Fritillary

Lake Sturgeon<sup>3</sup>

Plains Topminnow

### **Aquatic Communities:**

Mid-order, Warm Water Stream\*

### **Terrestrial Communities:**

Eastern Riparian Forest

Cottonwood-Peachleaf Willow Riparian Woodland

Cottonwood Riparian Woodland

Cottonwood-Diamond Willow Woodland\*  
Dry Upland Bur Oak Woodland\*  
Sandbar Willow Shrubland  
Riparian Dogwood-False Indigobush Shrubland  
Buckbrush Shrubland  
Freshwater Seep\*  
Eastern Cordgrass Wet Prairie\*  
Northern Cordgrass Wet Prairie\*  
Eastern Bulrush Deep Marsh\*  
Cattail Shallow Marsh\*  
Reed Marsh  
Eastern Pondweed Aquatic Wetland\*  
Loess Mixed-grass Prairie\*  
Eastern Sand Prairie\*  
Sandhills Mesic Tall-grass Prairie\*  
Sandhills Dune Prairie  
Perennial Sandbar  
Sandbar/Mudflat

\* Priority for conservation in this BUL

<sup>1</sup> This is the only BUL where the species is known to occur

<sup>2</sup> Known to occur in only one other BUL

<sup>3</sup> Known to occur in only two other BULs

<sup>4</sup> Known to occur in only three other BULs