Audubon’s Conservation Ranching Program

# Initial Ranch Coordination - Habitat Management Plan Questionnaire

(Purpose: The items and questions below are intended to identify the ranch information necessary to complete a Habitat Management Plan and initiate dialogue on how to best document or implement the actions required for Audubon certification.)

INFORMATION CHECKLIST

The following items will be needed and directly included in your ranch’s Habitat Management Plan (without them, the plan will be incomplete, and the auditors will not be able sign-off on the certification until the information is provided):

* Basic ranch information, including:
  + Ranch name – include the separate ownership and operation names, if both are not included under the same ranch name;
  + Contact information – name, physical address, phone number, and email address;
  + Ranch county and state location (if different than the physical address above); and
  + Acres of grazed lands (including both owned/deeded lands and leased lands).
* A map that includes all grazing pasture names, boundaries, and acreages (including leased lands) and the current year’s timing for the rotational grazing in each pasture (not necessary to include all paddocks). If your rotational grazing plan includes the next 2 years, please include that information as well. (*This information can be provided in a variety of formats, including plats, drawn maps, photos or other electronic files of maps, or spatial GIS software files, but must include the legals [i.e., sections, township/range]).*
* A map that includes all hay or crop pasture boundaries (including leased lands) and the current year’s timing for haying/harvest in each of these pastures. If your haying/harvest plan includes the next 2 years, please include that information as well.
* Ranch operation details, including:
  + Livestock inventory – type (cattle/sheep) and number of class or age,
  + Total number of head the ranch currently supports, and
  + Total number of head the ranch could support under optimal conditions (e.g., a good precipitation year)

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you have any operational plans or new infrastructure anticipated over the next 3 years that will result in the conversion, surface disturbance, or reduction of any native or perennial rangelands on the ranch (including leased lands)? If so, please describe the nature of the anticipated activities, pasture location(s), acreage, and affected habitat.

1. Do you expect any energy resource development (e.g., oil or gas, wind, solar) on the ranch (including leased lands) over the next 3 years? If so, please describe in as much detail (type, pasture location(s), acreage, timing, etc.) as possible.
2. Do you anticipate any new plantings or reseeding efforts on the ranch (including leased lands) over the next 3 years? If so, please describe in detail (type [e.g., crop, cover crop, rangeland reseeding or inter-seeding, trees], species or type of seed mix, pasture location(s), acreage, timing, etc.).
3. At least 50% of the ranch must be managed to provide benefit to avian species – your rotational grazing and haying plans will fulfill that annual requirement, if designed to meet the other protocol standards over at least half of the ranch. Are there any additional native habitat restoration, enhancement, or protection efforts on the ranch that we should know about? If so, please describe in detail (nature and type of habitat management, expected outcome, pasture location(s), approximate acreage, timing, etc.).
4. Please detail some aspects of your rotational grazing plan:
   1. How does the ranch develop it’s rotational grazing plan each year (e.g., what are the key considerations) and what are the primary objectives of the plan?
   2. Does the current grazing plan you provided represent a typical year’s plan? If not, please explain how and why the current plan is unique (e.g., adjusted rest periods due to drought)?
   3. Are there any aspects of your rotational grazing plan that you feel are unique or are particularly beneficial to the sustainability of your lands (e.g., specific livestock or habitat management strategies, ranch layout considerations, ranch infrastructure advantages)?
   4. Does the ranch monitor pasture conditions to appropriately time grazing rotations? If so, please describe your methodology (e.g., photograph documentation, structure indices, vegetation plot sampling), including the timing and frequency of the monitoring.
   5. Does at least 5% the ranch lands have high vegetative structure of 6 inches or taller to provide for avian nesting cover in the following year? If so, where is that located (i.e., which pastures) relative to your current year’s grazing plan?
5. Which specific weeds or undesirable plants are particularly challenging to deal with on the ranch and what kind of management actions (e.g., herbicides, mechanical or biological controls, prescribed grazing, fire) are utilized to control these species?
6. Please detail some aspects of your water management plan on the ranch:
   1. Are there any natural drainages that intersect the ranch property? If so, what kind of seasonal flow occurs in those drainages?
   2. Has the ranch implemented any water supply or enhancement projects? Does the ranch have ephemeral drainages with head cuts that may contribute to runoff sedimentation?
   3. Does the ranch have green areas such as springs, seeps, and sub-surface irrigation areas? If so, how are these protected to minimize impacts from livestock?
7. Does the ranch make any efforts to control mosquitos at livestock tanks or impoundments?

1. Please review Audubon’s Conservation Program - Suggested Protocols (the last Protocol section). Are there any ‘Suggested’ conservation measures the ranch has or is currently implementing you would like to highlight in your Habitat Management Plan? If so, please describe the nature of the activities, pasture location(s), acreage, and affected habitats or expected outcome(s) of those efforts.
2. Are there any unique circumstances to the overall setting or management of the ranch related to the surrounding lands (e.g., adjacent to public lands or wildlife conservation areas or other land-use conservation initiatives in the area)?
3. Please list any avian monitoring efforts (historical or current) you know of that occur on the ranch or in the surrounding areas.
4. Are there any priority bird species included in the Audubon protocols that you are particularly interested in having included in your Habitat Management Plan?