At-Scale Adaptive Management in Recovery Efforts for Piping Plovers on Alkali Lakes in North Dakota and Montana

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Recovery of threatened and endangered species requires managers to implement adaptive management at scales sufficient to reverse declines. The Great Plains population of piping plover was listed federally as a threatened species in 1985. Despite listing, the population continued to decline across the entire Great Plains until 1998 when the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service and the Conservancy, in cooperation with state game agencies and private landowners, implemented a collaborative management and monitoring approach. This effort, in combination with research on improving reproductive success and habitat quality, has resulted in population growth in 6 of the past 8 years for alkali lake-associated birds. Management to date has dealt primarily with addressing the primarily stress, altered predator communities. In 2005, we launched management that is designed to address the source of the stress by eliminating artificial predator habitat and restoring fragmented landscapes favorable to mesocarnivores. We also broadened the partnership for these efforts, gaining the financial support and focus of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Results of this effort represent implementation of adaptive management at-scale through a multi-partner approach.