

DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Willard Bay Upland Game Area

Habitat Management Plan

April 2009

Primary Purpose of UGA

The primary purposes of the Willard Bay Upland Game area are: to preserve, restore, and enhance both aquatic and terrestrial habitat for wildlife; protect cultural resources; and provide for recreational opportunities that are compatible with the purpose of upland and wetland ecosystems. Although management focus has primarily been on the production and survival of ring-necked pheasants, it has been assumed that improving deficiencies in habitat components needed by pheasants will also benefit other upland, grassland, and wetland associated wildlife. The land is owned by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), but is managed by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) as mitigation for loss of wildlife and wildlife habitat resulting from construction of Willard Bay Reservoir.

Wildlife Species

The Willard Bay Upland Game Area (UGA) provides crucial year-round habitat for the ring-necked pheasant, as well as waterfowl and other wildlife. Its unique combination of various types of grasslands, wetlands, agricultural lands, and extensive stands of trees and shrubs make it attractive to a very diverse group of wildlife species. It is an important winter roosting area for the bald eagle, a state species of concern. Other state species of concern that have been known to occur historically or currently on the UGA, or in the near vicinity, include the American White Pelican, Bobolink, Burrowing owl, Ferruginous hawk, Greater sage-grouse, Lewis's woodpecker, Long-billed curlew, Mountain plover and Short-eared owl. The Northern goshawk, a conservation agreement species has also been observed in the area.

Habitat Conditions/Problems

Vegetation on upland areas is tailored to meet the needs of the ring-necked pheasant, including plants that provide nesting habitats, along with food and cover areas. The West unit is comprised of approximately 1,200 acres, with 900 acres of mudflats and wetlands, and 300 acres of uplands. Vegetation on the uplands includes mainly greasewood, basin sagebrush, saltgrass and foxtail barley, although there have been up to 90 acres containing small grains, annual weeds, a mix of herbaceous perennial grass/forb communities, large trees and woody shrubs. The East unit contains approximately 120 acres of upland habitat vegetated with old stands of small grains and alfalfa, a mix of herbaceous perennial grass/forbs, and shrub rows. Nearly 30 acres of dense emergent wetlands containing mainly bulrush, cattail and *Phragmites*, lines the southern edge of the unit. On both units most of the vegetation types that are more valuable to pheasants have decreased in quantity and quality due to budget constraints and a lack of man power

to renovate the habitats. Upland and wetland noxious weeds are prolific on both units. The West unit is highly prone to flooding during peak stream flows, raising concern for drainage and high silt loading on the UGA, and also on Harold S. Crane Waterfowl Management Area (WMA) to the west. Although reduced since mitigation efforts were implemented, pheasant predation by foxes, skunks and raccoons continues to occur. Litter and illegal dumping are also causing destruction to habitat.

Access Plan

The Willard Bay UGA is open to the public year-round. Roads are graded twice annually and re-graded as needed. The main access road on the West unit is in need of major improvements, including culvert placement to mitigate drainage issues, as well as re-grading and re-graveling. This road is also the main public access for Harold S. Crane WMA waterfowl hunters, Willard Reservoir fisherman and is increasingly used as a destination for observing wildlife. A proposal is currently being drafted to address these road issues.

Maintenance Activities

Repair boundary fences and gates to prevent motorized vehicles from creating unauthorized roads and eliminate livestock trespassing. Maintain access roads and parking lots and assure that appropriate signs are in place to communicate rules and regulations of the UGA. Replace regulatory signs. Monitor and control noxious weeds by means other than chemical application.

Habitat Improvement

Due to less intense management of the area, pheasant food and nesting habitat have experienced some deterioration. Improvements will be made as personnel time and project budget allow.

DRAFT
Willard Bay
Upland Game Area

-Habitat Management Plan-

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I. Background Information

Property Description

The Willard Bay Upland Game Area (UGA) is comprised of two neighboring land parcels situated at the edge of Willard Bay Reservoir; The East Unit occurs southeast of the reservoir. It has approximately 120 acres and is in Box Elder County. The West Unit lines the southern edge of the reservoir. It has approximately 1,200 acres and is mainly in Box Elder County, although its southernmost area is in Weber County (Appendix A, Map 1). Where the UGA is not bordered by Willard Bay Reservoir, it is mainly surrounded by private land. The Harold S. Crane Waterfowl Management Area (WMA) is just west of the West Unit (Appendix A, Map 2). Willard Bay UGA lies within the following full or partial sections: Township 7 North, Range 2 West, Sections 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and Township 7 North, Range 3 West, Sections 13 and 24. The full legal description is listed in Appendix B.

Encumbrances

- **Minerals**
 - Oil, gas, coal, and mineral prospect rights are reserved. The BOR reserves the right to issue leases or permits to prospect for oil, gas or minerals.
- **Water rights/shares**
 - No water rights were acquired with the property and none currently exist. In 1987, the UDWR was granted 0.5 cubic feet per second (cfs) from Cold Springs Creek, which runs through the East Unit of Willard Bay UGA and into the south drain, although this water right has since been transferred for use on Harold S. Crane WMA.
- **Easements/ROWS/MOUs**
 - The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) has a right of way for full ingress for passage over and egress from all of such land for the purpose of carrying on operations of the United States.
 - The BOR reserves the right to remove materials from the UGA that are needed for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Reservoir and its facilities, primarily borrow material for repairs to the Willard Bay dike.
 - Rights of way exist for roads, railroads, telephone lines, transmission lines, ditches, conduits or pipelines on, over or across said lands. A copy of this information is on file with the UDWR Northern Region office.

Grazing

In compliance with the current agreement between the BOR and UDWR, grazing is not permitted on the UGA. In the future, however, grazing may be utilized as a habitat management tool to achieve vegetation goals.

Land Acquisition History

The United States Bureau of Reclamation has primary ownership of the Willard Bay UGA land. This land and all land associated with Willard Reservoir was acquired in fee title or withdrawn from the public domain for the construction and creation of the reservoir. Previous to this acquisition, the land had existed as a number of land tracts with various owners.

In 1965, the BOR entered into an official agreement with the UDWR, which permitted the UDWR to assume jurisdiction of a parcel of land south of Willard Reservoir (now referred to as the “West Unit”) for wildlife management purposes. The concept of this transfer of land management was to mitigate losses of upland wildlife habitat associated with the development of Willard Bay Reservoir. The Division was to maximize the wildlife potential of the land in order to facilitate the highest public benefit. All operations and maintenance activities were to be the responsibility of the UDWR.

In 1975, the area was dropped from all Division budgets due to a lack of man power and a lack of federal aid assignment. No further management occurred until a budget was reinstated in 1986 via funding from the Upland Game program and at a time when the Great Salt Lake was flooding and pheasant habitat was lacking. In 1987, a new agreement was made that expanded the area managed by the UDWR. While awaiting funding for recreational facilities to be developed on what is now called the “East Unit,” the BOR requested the land be temporarily managed by the UDWR and developed as upland game habitat until such funding was approved. The East Unit currently remains under UDWR management.

In 1991, an agreement was made to further expand UDWR managed lands to include a parcel on the north end of the reservoir, referred to as the “North Unit;” however, in 1994 the North Unit was dropped from UDWR management due to a decrease in the budget.

Currently, the West and East Units are managed by the UDWR, comprising nearly 1,320 acres of land. Table 1 provides a short summary of the land tracts acquired by the BOR that are currently associated with the Willard Bay UGA. A full description of the land tracts, legal information, and a map are located in Appendix B.

A new agreement is presently being drafted for UDWR management of BOR lands for an additional 20 years. No additional land parcels are included in this agreement due to budget and personnel restraints; however expansion is possible in future years and would likely include regaining management of the North Unit. At this time, the North Unit is

not actively managed, but remains suitable and available for wildlife habitat development, if desired. Any future expansion would be negotiated with the BOR upon supplementation to or the expiration of an old agreement and included in the creation of a future agreement. Any future agreements will be on file at the UDWR Northern Region office.

Table 1.

Tract No.	Previous Owners	Acreage	Full/ Partial UDWR management of acreage	Current UDWR Unit Classification	Township, Range, and Section (S.L.B.&M.)	BOR Acquisition/ UDWR Acquisition Date
7	J.L. McFarland	58.44	Partial	West	Sec. 17, T7N, R2W	1955/1965
8	Willard A. Skeen	28.96	Partial	West	Sec. 17, T7N, R2W	1957/1965
92	J.L. McFarland	122.60	Partial	West	Sec. 17, T7N, R2W	1958/1965
93	Hot Springs Farm, Inc.	52.44	Partial	West	Sec. 17, T7N, R2W	1957/1965
94	George I. Alvord	59.84	Full	West	Sec. 17, T7N, R2W	1958/1965
95	W. John Maw & Sons, Inc.	539.28	Partial	West	Sec. 17 & 18, T7N, R2W	1957/1965
96	George East	250.79	Partial	West	Sec. 13, T7N, R3W	1958/1965
97	Willard A. Skeen	141.63	Partial	West	Sec. 17, T7N, R2W	1957/1965
102	George I. Alvord	17.50	Full	West	Sec. 17, T7N, R2W	1957/1965
103	J.L. McFarland	11.23	Full	West	Sec. 17, T7N, R2W	1958/1965
104	W. John Maw & Sons, Inc.	377.14	Full	West	Sec. 17, 18, 19, 20, T7N, R2W Sec. 24, T7N, R3W	1957/1965
105	George East	28.02	Full	West	Sec. 13, T7N, R3W	1958/1965
106	W. John Maw & Sons, Inc.	71.86	Full	West	Sec. 24, T7N, R3W	1957/1965
WC-53	Hot Springs Farm, Inc.	90.38	Full	East	Sec. 16, T7N, R2W	1961/1987
WC-54	Roy Williams	14.58	Partial	East	Sec. 9, T7N, R2W	1961/1987
WC-55	George D. Harding	11.84	Partial	East	Sec. 9, T7N, R2W	1961/1987
WC-56	Yoshi Suzuki	115.10	Partial	East	Sec. 9, T7N, R2W	1961/1987
87	Yoshi Suzuki	31.90	Partial	East	Sec. 9, T7N, R2W	1957/1987
88	George D. Harding	1.40	Partial	East	Sec. 9, T7N, R2W	1957/1987

Historic Uses

Historically, Native American Indians utilized the area for daily life. More recently, it was used for livestock grazing and waterfowl hunting. It is currently a popular recreation and dog-training area, and continues to be used for upland game, dove and waterfowl hunting.

Purpose of Division Ownership

The land is owned by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, but is managed by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources as mitigation for loss of wildlife and wildlife habitat resulting from construction of Willard Bay Reservoir. It is managed primarily for the production and survival of ring-necked pheasants, but ultimately strives to preserve,

restore, and enhance both aquatic and terrestrial habitat for wildlife; protect cultural resources; and provide for recreational opportunities that are compatible with the purpose of upland and wetland ecosystems.

Key Wildlife Species Occurring on the UGA

The Willard Bay UGA provides crucial year round habitat for the ring-necked pheasant, as well as waterfowl and other birds. It is also an important roosting area for bald eagles in the winter. State species of concern such as the short-eared owl, although rare in abundance on the WMA, can be found on the area year round. The long-billed curlew, also a state species of concern, utilizes the area for both production and foraging. It vacates the WMA in the winter, but returns in the spring. All species of conservation concern known to occur on the UGA are discussed further in the “Sensitive Species” section of this plan and summarized in Table 2 located in Appendix D.

Public Recreation Opportunities and Restrictions

The Willard Bay UGA offers an abundance of recreational opportunities. Uses include upland game, dove and waterfowl hunting, dog training, trapping, fishing access and bird watching. In addition, the area provides access to Willard Bay Reservoir, Harold Crane WMA and Bear River Bay of the Great Salt Lake. Much of the dog training facilities are restricted to seasonal use, however, the pond and the areas south of the road on the West Unit can be used year round for dog training. Dog training, trials, and show events are coordinated through the area supervisor. They have been restricted to hunting breeds only. Recreational activities not allowed on the UGA include target and trap shooting, camping, horseback riding (off maintained roads), OHV use, and events or activities involving model vehicles or airplanes. Permits are required for special use activities on the UGA and must be filed with the UDWR months in advance (R657-28). Special uses are defined as “specific, non-depleting land uses, including seismic or land surveys, research sites, organized activity, or physical access on division lands.” It is illegal to possess or use a firearm or archery tackle on the UGA except for individuals training dogs in the designated year round training areas having possession of a dog-training permit, during approved group field trials or during current dove, upland game and waterfowl seasons. UGA visitors are required to pack out all garbage.

Conservation Partners Involved in Acquisition

The United States Bureau of Reclamation has primary ownership of the Willard Bay UGA land; however, as mitigation for the construction of Willard Bay Reservoir, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources manages the land for wildlife purposes.

II. Property Inventory

Existing Capital Improvements

Aside from minor pheasant food and cover cultivation and construction of a boundary fence, few improvements were made to the Willard Bay UGA prior to 1985. Since this time, roadways, fences, signage, and water improvements have all been installed.

- **Roads:** All main access roads were renovated beginning in 1985 by installing culverts and by grading and graveling surfaces. A boat launch and adjacent parking area were also constructed. To date, the West unit has approximately four miles of graveled roads, four parking areas and a low-maintenance boat launch. The roadway on and adjacent to the west unit is in need of major improvements, including culvert placement to mitigate drainage issues, as well as re-grading and re-graveling. A proposal is currently being drafted to address this. Typically, the roads are re-graded twice annually, and, as needed, the main access roads are re-graveled. There are no roads or parking areas on the East unit. Access information and road features are available in the Access Management Plan and map included in Appendix C.
- **Fences:** The West unit contains 10 miles of internal and boundary fence, which lies along the north, south and east sides of the unit. In 1993, seven miles of perimeter fencing was installed to enclose the main access road. In 2005, approximately two miles of fence was rebuilt along the south boundary. There are 19 gates on the West unit. Main fences and gates are inspected and repaired, if needed, twice annually. There are no fences on the East unit, but two roadway barricade gates are under the management of the Division.
- **Facilities:** A 70-acre dog training area was initiated in 1985 and has since expanded. It currently includes six observation mounds and a dog-training pond, which is detailed in the “water developments” section below. The UGA is governed by approximately 50 regulatory signs, which also includes one entrance sign for each unit. In 2005, the West unit entrance sign was rebuilt. In 2009, all main entrance signs are to be replaced with newly formatted WMA signs. There are no restroom facilities or trash receptacles on the UGA.
- **Water Rights:** No water rights are currently associated with the UGA. The UDWR obtained one water right (# 29-3294) in 1987 for 0.5 cubic feet per second from Cold Springs Creek in Box Elder County to be used for irrigation of approximately 30 acres of land on the East unit between April 1 and October 31 of each year; however, this water right was recently transferred for use on Harold Crane WMA due to the discontinuation of management of small grain crops and shrub rows on Willard Bay UGA.
- **Water Developments:** A system of irrigation ditches exists that were previously used to supply water to shrub rows, nesting cover and food plots. Although the UGA is no longer actively irrigated, each unit is equipped for irrigation if management elected to do so. Each unit functions on a separate system of irrigation. For the West unit, water is supplied as irrigation overflow and seepage from adjacent landowners. It can be channeled into a collection ditch and used to irrigate the area. Discharge would flow toward the Great Salt Lake. No water shares are necessary for this operation. For the East unit, the irrigation method would require that the water rights previously transferred to Harold S. Crane WMA be returned to Willard Bay UGA so that a pumped ditch system could utilize water from Cold Springs

Creek. Discharge would flow toward the South Drain and the Great Salt Lake.

Approximately 3,100 feet (West Unit) and 2,400 feet (East Unit) of irrigation ditches were created in 1986 to add to the previously existing 4,000 feet of ditch in the West unit. Three new pipe culverts with head gates and 15 small canvas, plywood or earthen check dams were also initiated at that time. In 2000, a 1.2-acre, 5-foot deep pond was created to enhance the dog-training facility. Water is ditch delivered into the pond through a 24-inch screw-type head gate that originates from the South Drain. The elevation of the pond water fluctuates according to water in the South Drain, but can be adjusted and shut off if desired. No water right is needed.

- **Wood Products:** A stand of Russian olive trees exists, and serves as important habitat for ring-necked pheasants. Harvest of wood products is highly unlikely given these circumstances.

Cultural Resources

The entire management area has been previously surveyed for cultural material resulting in the identification of several archaeological sites. Prior to conducting any surface disturbing activities on the west undeveloped area, the site must be surveyed by a qualified archaeologist.

Sensitive Species

There are twenty-three state species of conservation concern (as identified in the Utah Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Plan (2005)) known to presently or historically occur either within or immediately adjacent to the UGA, including 12 sensitive species. Of the 12 sensitive species, 10 are state wildlife species of concern and one is a conservation agreement species. Many observations are along boundary areas or are not differentiated between this area and Harold S. Crane WMA adjacent to the west.

- ***State Wildlife Species of Concern:*** American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Bobolink, Burrowing Owl, Ferruginous Hawk, Greater Sage-grouse, Lewis's Woodpecker, Long-billed Curlew, Mountain Plover, and Short-eared Owl.
- ***Conservation Agreement Species:*** Northern Goshawk

A full list containing all species of conservation concern, their classification, state tier level, preferred habitat, season present and relative abundance is available in Appendix D.

Important Fish and Wildlife Habitats

The Willard Bay UGA has primarily been managed for the production and survival of the ring-necked pheasant, although it provides important habitat for other birds and waterfowl as well. Nesting, brooding, summer, and winter habitats are available for the variety of avian species on the UGA, including upland game birds, shorebirds, wading birds, avian scavengers, raptors and waterfowl. The Great Salt Lake and surrounding

area, including the UGA, lies in the pathway of a major migration corridor utilized by millions of birds each year. The UGA provides important feeding and resting habitat for these birds. Other wildlife in the area includes beaver, muskrat and raccoon. Its unique combination of various types of grasslands, wetlands, agricultural and extensive stands of trees and shrubs make it attractive to a very diverse group of wildlife species. A complete list of Willard Bay UGA wildlife species is available in Appendix A, which includes all birds that have been observed on the UGA and vicinity as well as a general list of common wildlife species.

General Condition of Habitats

Habitat Types

Although the UDWR attained rights to the UGA in 1965, habitat management did not begin until 1967. Prior to this time, the area was typical of western Weber and eastern Box Elder counties. Upland habitat was vegetated with sagebrush, greasewood, cheatgrass, and sand dropseed. Upland areas overrun by excessive grazing or disturbed by fire contained white top, mustards, cheatgrass, teasel, and thistles. Wetland habitat ranged from mudflats and wet meadow habitat to emergent marshes.

Since management began, several habitat improvements have been made to better accommodate the needs and preferences of the ring-necked pheasant. Transformation began in 1967 with a 6-acre experimental pheasant food plot. In 1971, a large food and cover cultivation project was initiated on the West unit as mitigation for pheasant habitat losses associated with the construction of Interstate 15 in Box Elder County. It included planting 2,300 Russian Olive trees and 120 acres of small grains, clover and wheat grass. Beginning in 1986, the UGA underwent major renovation including the establishment of shrub rows, nesting cover and experimental food plots, as well as the installation of roads, parking lots, ditches, and a dog training facility. Following these changes, there was a substantial increase in the variety and abundance of upland and grassland bird species, but overall use has decreased recently. A map detailing the 1986-1990 plantings on each unit is included in Appendix A.

Current habitat conditions are unique to each unit on the UGA. The West unit is comprised of 1,200 acres, which is dominated by 900 acres of mudflats intermittently vegetated with *Salicornia* and inland saltgrass, mostly occurring west of First Salt Creek. This area supports only occasional wetland and upland sites. The area was historically seasonally flooded, but has experienced increased amounts of peak flooding on the west end due to recent channelization and drainage issues. The soils in this area are poorly drained silt clay loams, with high salt and alkali content. East of First Salt Creek are 300 acres of upland habitat containing sandy soil vegetated with greasewood, basin sagebrush, saltgrass and foxtail barley, although within it there exists 90 acres of arable soil where the pheasant food and cover plantings on this unit were placed. As detailed in Appendix A (map 3), the plantings included 20 acres of food plots, 10 acres of annual weeds, and 60 acres of a herbaceous perennial grass/forb mix. Woody shrubs intermittently line approximately twelve miles of ditches on the unit.

The East unit includes approximately 120 acres of upland habitat, containing class I agricultural soil, the highest rated soil on the UGA. The eastern end of the unit contains 10 acres that was previously cooperatively farmed to produce corn and/or sorghum. This has been discontinued, but the soil remains highly suitable for agriculture. As detailed in Appendix A (map 4), there existed 15 acres of mixed food plot vegetation, 5 acres of disturbance tillage, 30 acres of herbaceous perennial grass/forb mix, and 2 miles of shrub rows. Active management of these crops has been discontinued. Approximately 30 acres of dense emergent wetlands associated with nearby Cold Springs Creek lines the southern edge of the unit. It contains mainly bulrush, cattails and phragmites.

Habitat Limitations

The West unit of the UGA is highly prone to flooding. The unit is situated near the shoreline of the Great Salt Lake and several creeks also converge in the area. Although rare, when water from the Great Salt Lake reaches an elevation of approximately 4210, the West unit begins flooding. When levels reach 4211.86, 70% of the area is submerged. The flooding peak also occurs seasonally when the converging creeks have high water levels. Peak type flooding and siltation have increased dramatically over the past 10 years both upstream and downstream on the lower UGA. This is believed to be related to channelization and excavation of former wetland habitat in response to adjacent landowner complaints. The channelization berms hold up adjacent drainage. The peak effect is intensified on the UGA since it lies downstream from adjacent land owners.

Noxious weeds are prolific in the area; however, in compliance with the management agreement between the BOR and the UDWR, potentially hazardous or toxic pesticides via chemical application have been banned to reduce liability, and to protect visitors of the UGA and adjacent Willard Bay State Park. The weeds cause concern because they compete with more preferred vegetation that would otherwise enhance habitat quality. The Division made a proposition to the BOR in 2008 to use Biological Agent Introduction (BAI) as a means to target specific noxious weeds including hoary cress, dyers woad, field bindweed, Canada thistle, poison hemlock, tamarisk, cattail and Eurasian watermilfoil; however, no decision has been made. It remains a potential weed control mechanism for the future. No method is currently being used to treat noxious weeds.

Pheasant predation continues to occur, although it has been reduced since 1993 when mitigation efforts were implemented. Those efforts included modifying habitat to provide secure escape and nesting cover, regulation of seasonal public use, and opening the area for public trapping of red fox, skunk and raccoon.

Human Use-Related Problems

Litter remains a major problem on the UGA. Illegal dumping still occurs and includes large items such as dilapidated cars and trailers. Vandalism of signs and fences is a constant problem. The UGA is a popular site for pheasant hunters and dog trainers alike, and the increasing numbers of both groups has led to conflict. With such a large number of pheasant hunters, the safety of other users is at risk. Efforts have been made to reduce conflicts that include requiring a certificate of registration (COR) and a special use permit

(SUP) for all major groups. Conflicting activities have been separated by space and time by assigning designated use areas for specific recreational activities and by only allowing certain activities during specific seasons. Although the road is lined with perimeter fence, there is still damage from OHV use on road edges, particularly on the westernmost two miles of road on the West unit.

Adjacent Land Uses and Potential Impacts

North of the West unit and northwest of the East unit, the UGA is bordered by Willard Bay State Park and Reservoir. It is owned and managed by the Bureau of Reclamation through management partnerships with the Weber Basin Water Conservancy District, the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation, and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Use of the area is recreational in nature and does not conflict with UGA management. To the east and south of both units, surrounding land is privately owned primarily by two other landowners. Current use consists of agricultural activities, such as crop production and grazing. Both landowners are interested in selling their properties, thus raising the concern of housing developments in the area. One is specifically interested in selling to developers, while the other has expressed an interest in selling to the UDWR, but declined UDWR's offer of appraised value on his property. The Division had begun unofficial negotiations in an attempt to purchase some of the land; however, their offers were refused because of timing and conflicting perception of value. West of the West Unit, the UGA is adjacent to the Harold S. Crane Waterfowl Management Area, which is managed by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Uses are similar to many of those of the Willard Bay UGA including waterfowl hunting (in appropriate seasons) and bird watching.

III. Management Goals and Objectives

Management of the Willard Bay Upland Game Area will take into account the goals, objectives and strategies of other Division planning efforts. These other plans are briefly discussed below.

UDWR Strategic Plan (2007-2011)

The management of the Willard Bay Upland Game Area has relevance to the following goals and objectives outlined in the Division's strategic plan:

Resource Goal – Expand wildlife populations and conserve sensitive species by protecting and improving wildlife habitat.

Objective R1- Protect existing wildlife habitat and improve 500,000 acres of critical habitats and watersheds throughout the state by 2011.

Objective R2- Increase fish and game populations to meet management plan objectives and expand quality fishing and hunting opportunities.

Objective R3- Conserve sensitive species to prevent them from being listed as threatened or endangered.

Constituency Goal – Achieve broad-based support for Division programs and budgets by demonstrating the value of wildlife to all citizens of Utah.

Objective C1- Increase public awareness of wildlife as a quality of life issue in order to expand our support base and achieve stable funding.

Objective C2- Improve Coordination with organizations, public officials, private landowners, industry, and government agencies to obtain support for Division programs.

These goals and objectives will be achieved through a variety of measures specified in the property and habitat management sections of this plan and include development and maintenance activities, habitat improvements, access management and fire management.

Wildlife Action Plan

The current Wildlife Action Plan, effective 2005-2015, is entitled the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS). This document outlines a statewide approach for the planning, cooperation, coordination, and implementation of wildlife and habitat conservation practices. The CWCS addresses the following elements:

- Approach for including the public, partners, and stakeholders; addresses the mission and authority of partners
- Outlines the effort to coordinate the CWCS with other plans
- Identifies species in greatest need of conservation and provides information about the abundance, distribution, and threats to these species
- Identifies priority habitats and discusses the problems, threats, and conservation needs for these habitats
- Discusses plans for monitoring and determining conservation success

IV. Strategies for Property Management

Development Activities

- Boundary fence needs
 - Repair at least four miles of old fencing on the West unit
- Sign needs
 - Replace entrance signs on both units
 - Replace damaged and destroyed regulatory signs
- Public Access needs
 - Address drainage issues on main road of West unit by installing culverts with ditches, and re-grading and re-graveling the road as a primary point of negotiation during the currently ongoing management agreement.
 - A topographical survey is needed to address drainage issues on the main road of the West unit.
- Habitat needs

- Utilize BAI as a mechanism to aid in the control of noxious weeds
- Collect, evaluate, and prioritize the methods formerly used that increased wildlife abundance.

Annual Maintenance Activities

- *Fence maintenance:* Repair and replace dilapidated or damaged fences and gates.
- *Road maintenance/closures:* Maintain fenced in areas where motorized vehicles are unauthorized. Assure that appropriate signs are in place to indicate any rules or restrictions. Re-gravel main access roads as needed and grade twice annually in the fall. Investigate usage and need for a small road on the east end of the West unit.
- *Parking areas:* Maintain existing parking areas and boat ramp.
- *Noxious weed control:* Assess spread of noxious weeds and monitor and control as time and budget allow by means other than chemical herbicide application.
- *Sign replacement:* Maintain boundary, entrance, and regulatory signs to clearly identify ownership, access, vehicle restrictions, and rules and regulations enforced on the WMA. Rebuild, repaint or replace signs as needed.
- *Maintenance of water developments:* Maintain check dams, culverts, ponds, and wetlands to maximize habitat quality on the WMA if intensive habitat management is reinstated.
- *Facilities:* Coordinate twice annual litter cleanup with UDWR personnel and volunteers

Zoning and Land Use Ordinances

Box Elder County has designated the East Unit of Willard Bay UGA as A-20 (Agricultural – 20 acre lots). The land use for the agricultural zone is compatible with managing the UGA for ring-necked pheasants and other wildlife.

The majority of the West Unit is in Box Elder County, except for the most southern portion, which is in Weber County. For that portion in Box Elder County, there are two classifications. The area east of First Salt Creek is composed primarily of upland habitat and is zoned as A-20 (Agricultural - 20 acre lots). The land use is compatible with management of the Willard Bay UGA. The area west of First Salt Creek contains mudflats with occasional upland and wetland habitat. Box Elder County has designated this area as MU-160 (Multiple Use – 160 acre plots). The purpose of this zone (“...open and generally undeveloped lands where human habitation should be limited in order to protect land and other open space resources; to encourage use of the land, where appropriate, for forestry, grazing, agriculture, mining, wildlife habitat, and recreation; to avoid excessive damage to watersheds, water pollution, soil erosion, danger from brushland fires, damage to grazing and livestock raising, and to wildlife values.”) is also compatible with the management of the UGA.

For the most southern portion of the UGA that occurs in Weber County, there are also two classifications. East of the Warren township boundary, near First Salt Creek, the area is designated as A-2 (Agricultural) by the county. The purpose of this zone (to designate farming areas where agricultural pursuits and the rural environment should be

promoted and preserved) is compatible with management of the UGA. West of the boundary line, Weber County classified the land as A-3 (Agricultural). The purpose of this zone (to designate farming areas where heavy agricultural pursuits can be permanently maintained) is also in line with UGA management.

V. Strategies for Habitat Management

Unit Management Plans for Wildlife Species

Although there are no specific unit management plans applicable to the Willard Bay UGA, strategies for habitat management will be based on a holistic approach that takes into account the wildlife, habitat and human components of the UGA. They include:

- Improve the production of upland grassland bird species, with emphasis on ring-necked pheasants.
- Protect wetlands and mudflats for shorebirds and waterfowl.
- Control human activities which compromise habitat production and survival, habitat quality and wetlands.
- Provide recreational and educational opportunities consistent with management objectives.
- Develop maintenance and development guidelines to effectively meet management objectives.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the management plan in meeting management objectives.

Habitat Improvement Plan

- Improve pheasant nesting and food habitat by renovating existing habitat and increasing plantings.
- Collect, list, and detail habitat and other management methods formerly used on the area to increase pheasant and other wildlife abundance in the event a higher level of management returns in the future.
- Improve drainage conditions on main road to better control flooding and reduce siltation.
- Repair, replace and maintain fences to keep motorized vehicles on authorized roads.
- Reduce noxious weeds and improve habitat.

Habitat improvement projects will be accomplished as personnel time and project budget permit.

Access Management Plan

The access management plan for the Willard Bay UGA is included in Appendix C. It discusses access to the UGA, rules and regulations for motorized vehicle operation in the area, and how this system is compatible with achievement of UGA management goals and objectives. A map is included, which shows authorized roads and parking facilities.

Fire Management Plan

No prescribed burns are conducted on the UGA. In the event of a wildfire, Weber County Fire Department (they are the First Responders) would respond, permitting the fire is accessible by their vehicles. Willard City and Box Elder County Fire Departments would also assist in any fire control efforts. For major wildfires, a joint effort of the UDWR and the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (DFFSL) would proceed according to guidelines established in the Memorandum of Understanding (2005) between the agencies. This MOU is on file at the UDWR Northern Region office.

The use of fireworks is prohibited on the UGA (R657-28-4,n).

Wood Products

Wood products are limited to habitat plantings. Harvest of wood products is highly unlikely given these circumstances.

Livestock Grazing Plan

In compliance with the current agreement between the BOR and UDWR, grazing is not permitted on the UGA. In the future, however, grazing may be utilized as a habitat management tool to achieve vegetation goals. To do this, the UDWR would need to negotiate with the BOR and the Weber Basin Water Conservancy District, comply with any guidelines under the special use permits and develop a thorough grazing management plan for the area. The area could be included in grazing management plans being developed for the other nearby WMA's.

Use of Surrounding Lands

The existence of Willard Bay State Park to the north of the UGA and Harold Crane WMA to the west precludes these boundaries from becoming developed. At the present time, lands to the south and east are utilized for agricultural practices and the proposed uses of property are in accordance with both county-zoning regulations; however, there is pressure to develop the surrounding lands.

VI. Summary Statement of Proposed Uses

The goals and objectives of the Willard Bay UGA are primarily to increase the production and survival of the ring-necked pheasant, but ultimately to preserve, restore, and enhance both aquatic and terrestrial habitat for wildlife; protect cultural resources; and provide for recreational opportunities that are compatible with the purpose of a wetland ecosystem.

VII. Monitoring and Evaluation

The area supervisor, assistant wildlife manager and regional wildlife manager will be responsible for monitoring overall effectiveness of the program. Appropriate sections will provide expertise, funding, time, materials, and equipment as required for maintenance of the area. The area supervisor will oversee the effectiveness of the UGA

and coordinate management efforts with the BOR. The regional team will amend this plan as needed.

VIII. Appendices

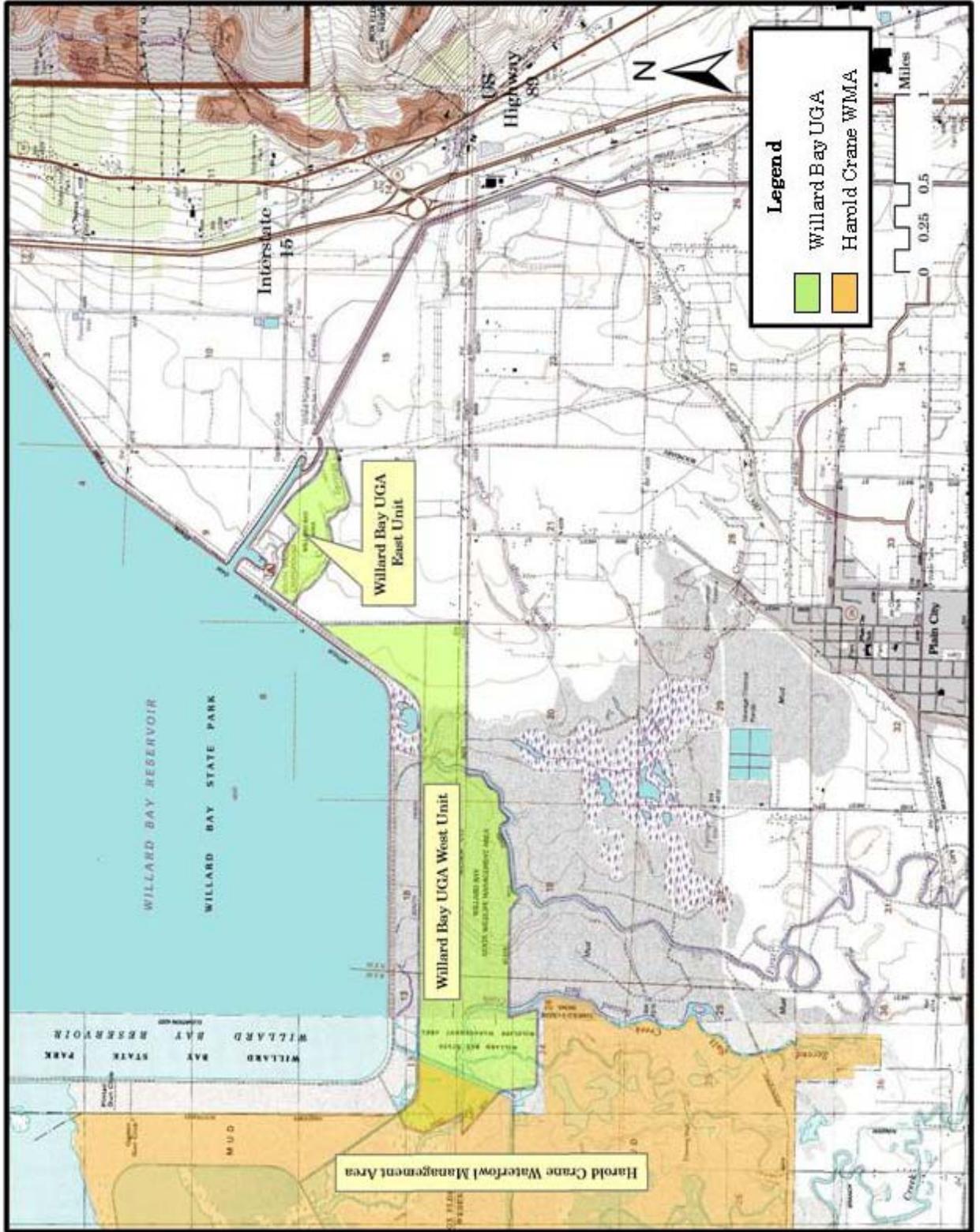
- Appendix A- General Maps
 - Location (Map 1)
 - Surrounding land ownership (Map 2)
 - Record of plantings (Maps 3 & 4)
- Appendix B- Legal Description and Encumbrances
 - Land Tract legal information
 - Land Tracts (Map 5)
- Appendix C- Access Management Plan
 - Public Access (Map 6)
- Appendix D – Wildlife Species
 - Sensitive Species and Species of Conservation Concern (Table 2)
 - Common Wildlife Species

Appendix A

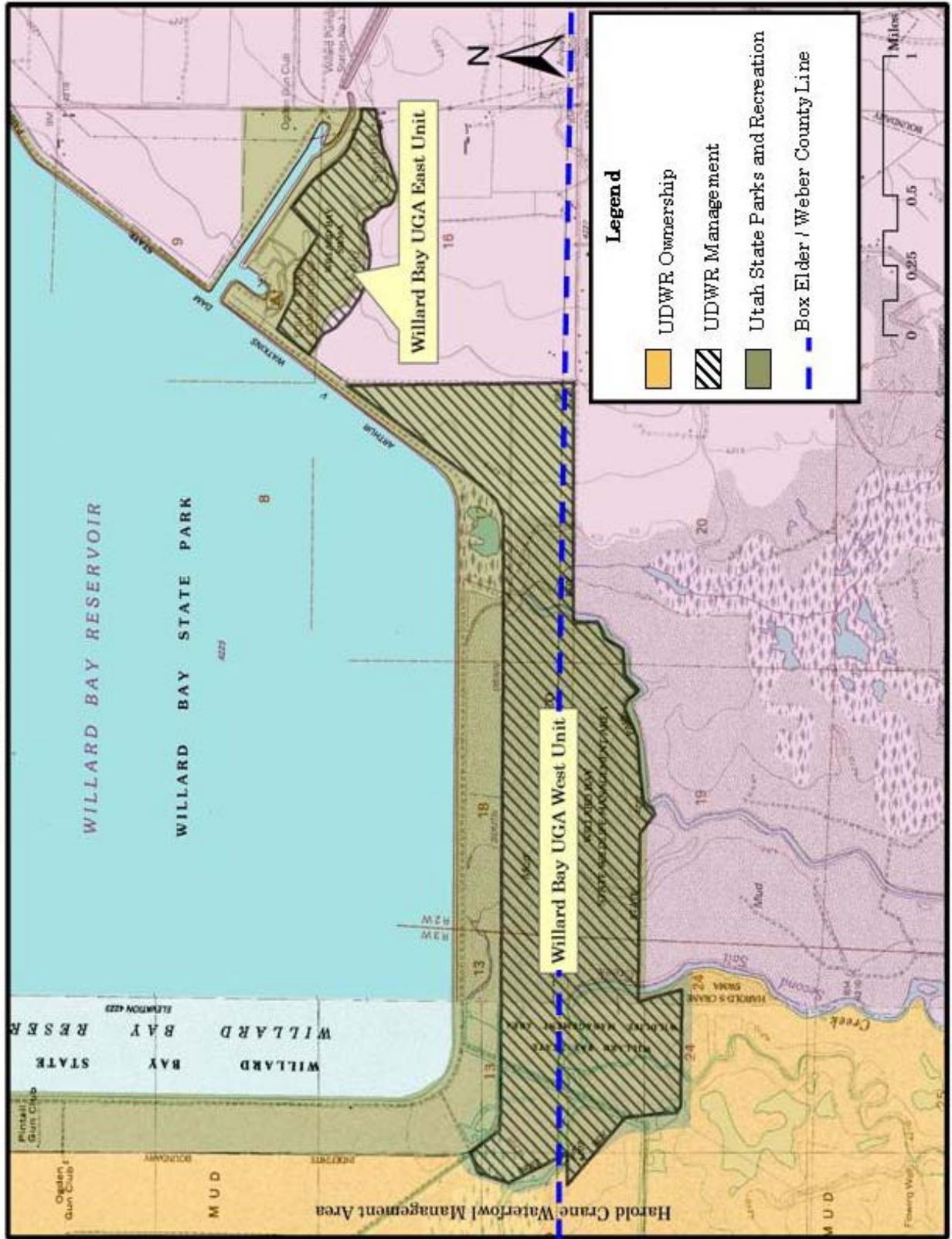
Maps

Map 1

Willard Bay UGA General Location

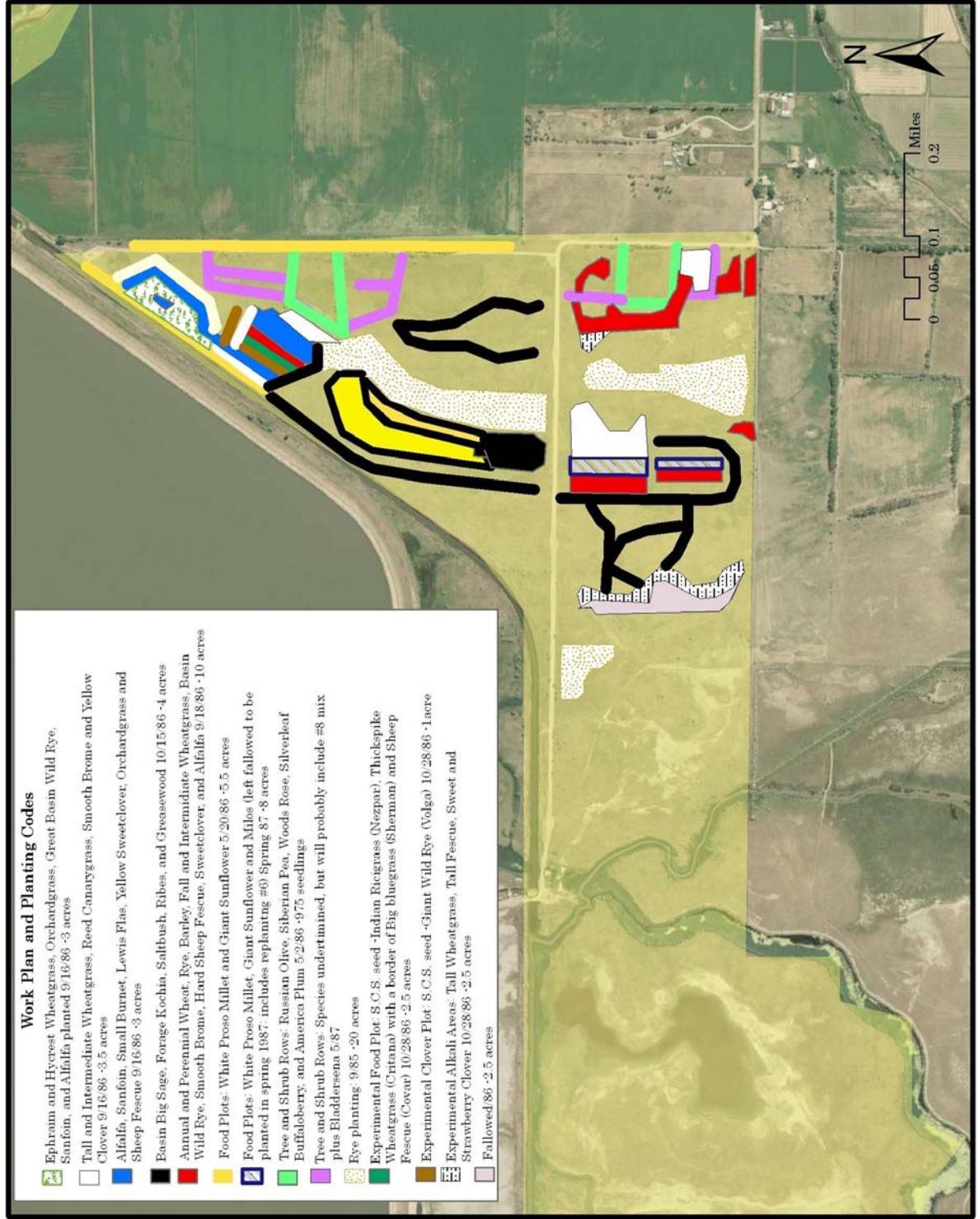


Map 2
 Willard Bay UGA Land Ownership



Map 3

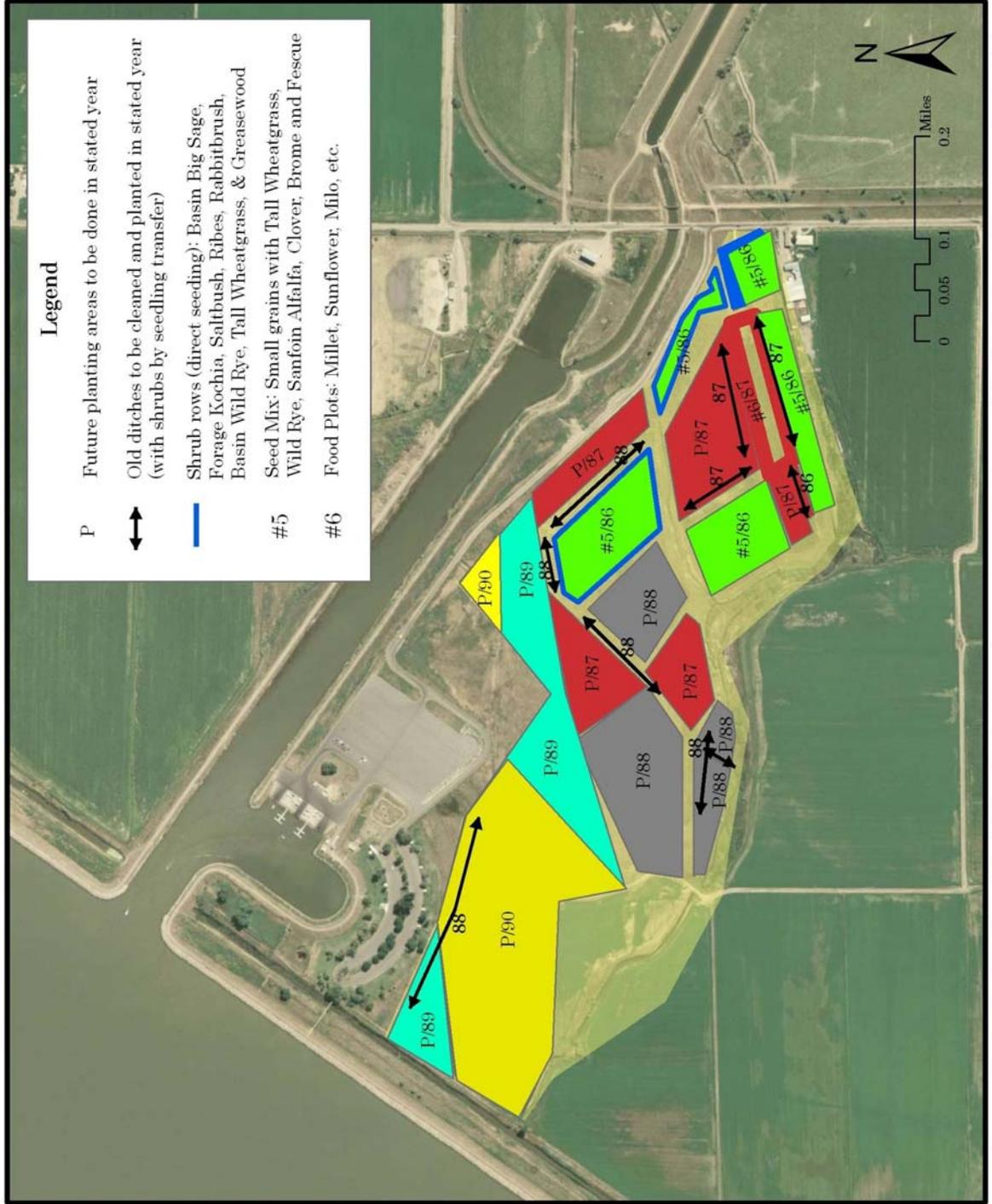
Willard Bay UGA West Unit 1986 Plantings (on east portion of West unit)



This map is a reproduction based on the original. The planting areas shown are approximations and should only be used for general planting information. A copy of the original map is on file at the Northern Region Office.

Map 4

Willard Bay UGA East Unit 1986 Plantings and Future Plans



This map is a reproduction based on the original. The planting areas shown are approximations and should only be used for general planting information. A copy of the original map is on file at the Northern Region Office.

Appendix C

Access Management Plan

Willard Bay Upland Game Area Access Management Plan

Purpose

To ensure that public use and access on the Willard Bay Upland Game Area is done in a manner that assists the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) in achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the habitat management plan.

Background

The Willard Bay UGA is managed by the UDWR under contractual agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to mitigate losses of upland wildlife habitat associated with the development of Willard Bay Reservoir. This unit provides critical habitat for ring-necked pheasants, but is also important to birds, waterfowl, and some small mammals. It is a popular recreation and waterfowl hunting location for the public and is open year-round. The access management plan will allow for public access and use of the unit while ensuring that wildlife and habitat management objectives are reached.

Access to the UGA

Public access is available year-round. The UGA is located in Weber and Box Elder counties and can be accessed from 4000 North via Exit 354 on Interstate 15. Large UDWR signs are posted at the entrances of each unit. The East unit is accessed from 4000 North by turning north at the entrance to Willard Bay South Marina. No parking areas exist on the unit, however, parking is available in an area located along the road to the marina. The West unit is accessed by continuing west on 4000 North. Three parking areas and one small boat launch with a parking area exists on the West unit. The dirt road adjacent to the Willard Bay dike within the West unit serves as the main access for visitors to the Harold S. Crane Waterfowl Management Area. It is also the main public access for Willard Reservoir fisherman and, increasingly, for wildlife watchers. In combination, it provides tens of thousands of public access use days annually. This road is in poor condition and proposed for improvement within the main habitat plan as part of updating of the management agreement with BOR. All roads are classified as private by Box Elder county and are therefore, not identified on the county map. An access map is included which shows the roads and parking areas on the UGA. Motorized vehicles, including OHV's are restricted to existing and designated roads (Utah Code Section 41-22-10.1). Harassment of wildlife or damage to the environment, including abuse of land, watershed, or impairment of plant or animal life while operating an OHV is illegal (Utah Code Section 41-22-13).

The UDWR reserves the right to restrict motorized and non-motorized access to the UGA if these activities are believed to be incompatible with the habitat management goals and objectives.

Enforcement of Access Management Plan

Division personnel will enforce this access plan in conjunction with local law enforcement agencies.

Informing the Public

Signs will be posted at entrances, roads, parking areas, and fencelines to notify the public of access boundaries, rules and regulations. Seasonal closures or other access issues will be included in the annual UDWR hunting proclamations, which are available in hard copy at UDWR offices and where licenses are sold or online at <http://wildlife.utah.gov/guidebooks>.

The UDWR will work with local, county, other state, and federal agencies to coordinate access plans that are consistent with the objectives and goals of Willard Bay UGA. The access management plan will be reviewed and changed as needed.

Willard Bay UGA Access Map

