

Verona Complex Project

The Verona Complex is a cluster of adjoining wetlands located in Clay County. A 160 acre federal Wildlife Production Area known as the Verona WPA is included in the complex along with several Ducks Unlimited properties totaling 440 acres and a 20 acre Wetland Reserve Program property for which there is a 30 year easement.

This project is unique in that several adjoining landowners were willing to simultaneously sell their marginal cropland, presenting the possibility of creating a complete ecological restoration encompassing an entire upland and wetland matrix. The area lacks a good supply of accessible groundwater for irrigating crops. Dryland cropping of corn and beans met with very limited success, enticing area landowners to consider selling their property. It is important to note that they were all willing sellers and most were absentee landowners.

This project reconnects an entire upland and wetland community, creating a restored functioning landscape.

Multiple wetlands in close proximity, connected by vegetative corridors, result in the greatest abundance and diversity of wildlife.

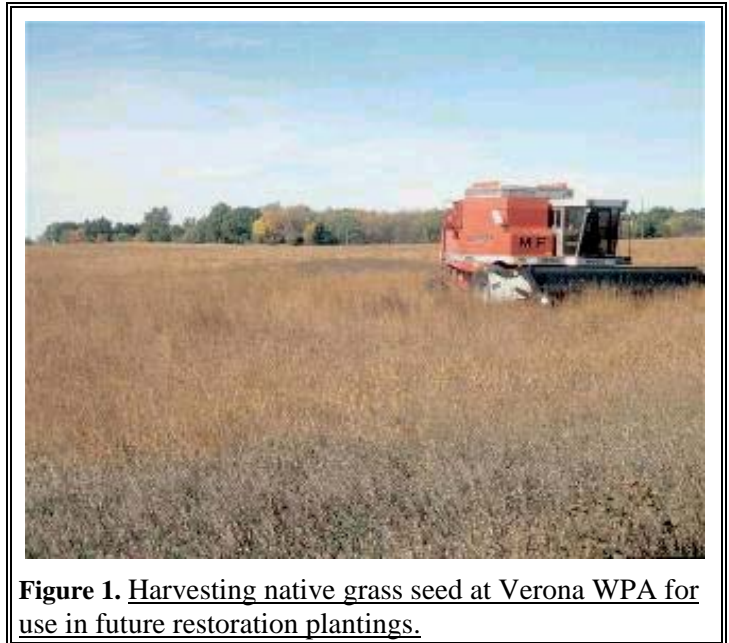


Figure 1. Harvesting native grass seed at Verona WPA for use in future restoration plantings.



Figure 2. Smartweed, a vital food source for migrating waterfowl, blooming at Verona WPA.

The Verona WPA and WRP restorations have been completed. The Ducks Unlimited properties have been acquired and restoration work will be completed on them over the next few years. Restoration work will include removal of sediment and trees, filling-in of a reuse pit, and reseeding disturbed areas.

Monitoring and base-line studies of the hydrologic, vegetative, and wildlife communities are planned before the restoration work begins. It is hoped that follow-up studies in the future will reveal more information about the benefits of having several wetlands restored in close proximity as compared to disjointed partial wetland areas.

THE PARTNERSHIP: Ducks Unlimited, Inc. purchased 440 acres of land for this project and has provided project guidance. The Rainwater Basin Joint Venture provided administrative services and additional project funding. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service conducted sediment surveys of the wetlands and completed a topographical survey. They also administered the WRP contract on the 20 acre property. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service owns and manages the 160 acre Verona WPA. Nebraska's Game and Parks Commission provided project guidance and continued monitoring and management. Additional funding was provided by the Nebraska Environmental Trust.