

Supporting Conservation Through Innovation

# The Midwest Conservation Biomass Alliance





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# MCBA Founders



- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- Agricultural Watershed Institute
- **FDC Enterprises**
- Illinois DNR
- Iowa State University
- Minnesota DNR
- Missouri Department of Conservation
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Nebraska Game and Parks
- Roeslein & Associates
- **Roeslein Farm**
- Southwest Badger RC&D
- The Nature Conservancy
- University of Illinois
- University of Minnesota
- University of Missouri
- **US Fish and Wildlife Service**
- **University of Wisconsin**
- Wisconsin DNR
- Wisconsin Energy Institute



# Our Common Ground: Native Biodiversity = Evolutionary Potential

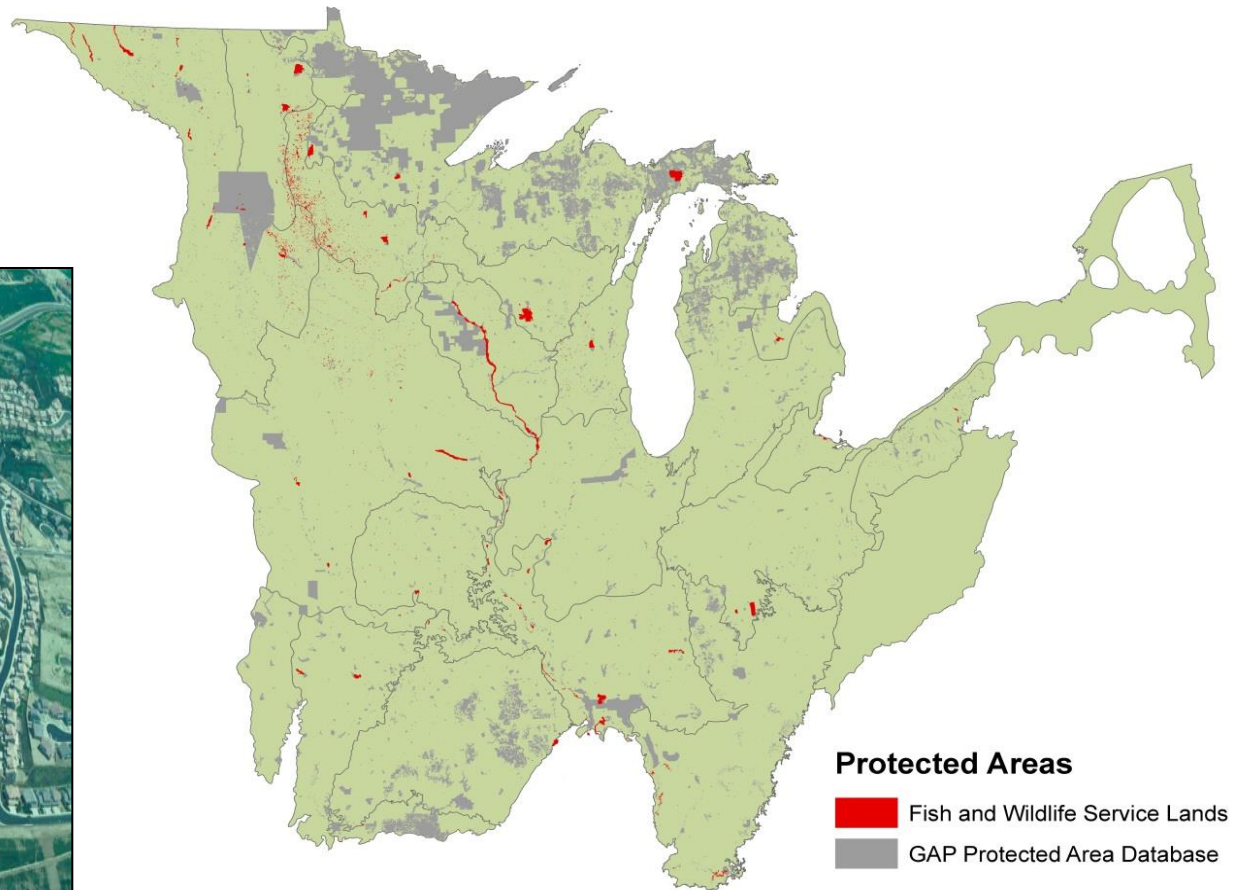
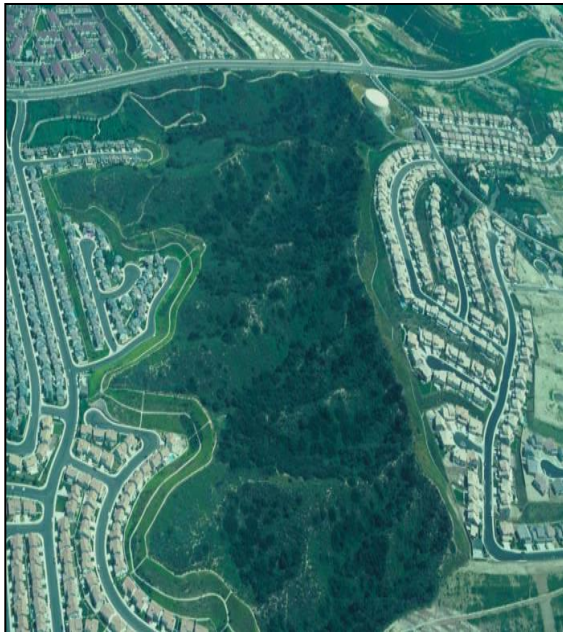


Photo: Frank Oberle

# The Problem: Can't get there from here



## Protected Areas in Upper Midwest



# Agents of Change

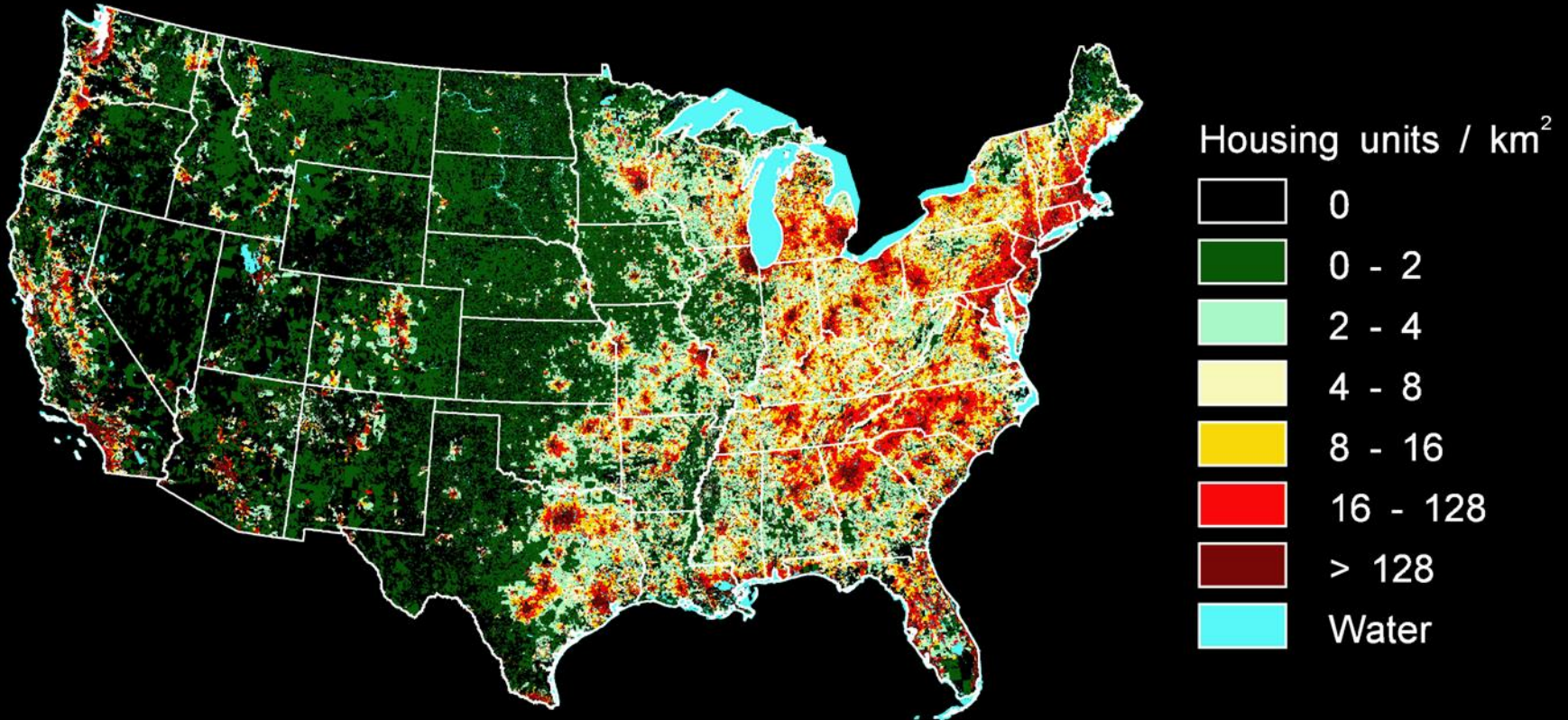


- Climate Change
- Reduced budgets
- Habitat Fragmentation
- Urban Encroachment
- Shifting Fire Regimes
- Invasive Species
- Increasing Air Pollution
- Energy Development
- Land Use Policy
- Subsidies



# United States

2030 Housing density  
Census partial block groups



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# Grassland Challenges



- Row crops are highly lucrative
- Taxes favor agriculture
- Subsidies for conservation ephemeral
- Culturally important to farm
- Food vs energy production vs wildlife





# Partnership Vision



- 30M acres natural grassland – Upper reaches of Mississippi River
- Retain habitat management ability
- Support R & D
- Demonstrate successes
- Reduce Gulf Hypoxia & provide other ecosystem services



Photo: Frank Oberle

# Partner Resources



- Innovation
- Expertise
- Technological advances
- Research capabilities
- Demonstration
- Land bases
- Information network
- Funding





# Working Together

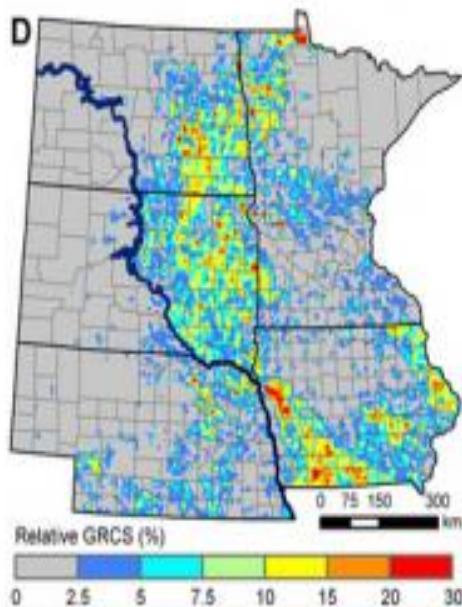


- Our success lies in the partnership we form and maintain
  - Everyone contributes: staff, equipment, funds
  - Respect intellectual property and confidentiality
  - Recognize and work toward common goals
  - Provide open access to information and tools
  - Demonstrate
  - Organize monitoring that supports management
  - Build strong communities supportive of grasslands

# Facilitate Implementation – Regional to Local Scale



- The Partnership – each entity applies their resources, as appropriate, to the shared vision





# Status



- New alliance
- Working slowly but steadily to solidify
- Asking appropriate questions
- Setting up a communication process
- Sharing information
- Developing collaborations



Photo: Frank Oberle

# Fostering innovation: examples



Photo: ISU



Photo: NRCS



Photo: Frank Oberle



# Ex 1: USFWS – Iowa State University STRIPS Project



- Improved soil retention
- Reduced nutrient runoff
- Supports grassland birds and other species
- Pollinators and crop pest predators
- Prairie planted in key areas only – more crop available



Photos: ISU



# Ex 2: USFWS – University of Wisconsin, Herbaceous biomass project



- Helping to achieving prescribed fire goals –  
Disturbance
- Provides local economic boost
- Reduced management costs
- Soil and nutrient retention



Photo: NRCS



Photo: Frank Oberle

# Ex 3: Marginal /Working Lands Project – University of Minnesota, USFWS and MDNR.



- Native grasses on marginal lands
- Preserve food and energy production while supporting wildlife
- Find biofuels in variety of sources
- Provide other ecosystem services



Photo: Frank Oberle







# Best practices used

- Common vision check
- Commitment check
- Business plan
- Operating procedures
- Communication plan



# Lessons Learned



- Project coordinator is critical
- Regular and open communication
- Review ethics policies as a group
- Set ground rules for working together
- Suggestions?

