

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Releases Water to Benefit Whooping Cranes

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) plans to release water from their Environmental Account (EA) to benefit the endangered whooping cranes. Whooping cranes use the Platte River in Nebraska as a stopover site during their migration in the Central Flyway north to Canada for the summer. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of other migratory birds, including over half a million Sandhill cranes, use the Platte River to roost and feed during the months of March and April.

Established in 1999, the EA is water stored in Lake McConaughy in western Nebraska and is managed by the Service to benefit four federally listed threatened or endangered target species on the Platte River – these species include the whooping crane, interior least tern, piping plover and pallid sturgeon.

This year the Service's highest priority water release from the EA is to benefit whooping cranes during their spring migration. The releases started on Saturday March 29th from Lake McConaughy and releases are planned to continue until May 10th. EA water should have all passed Grand Island by about May 24th. Flows in the Overton to Grand Island reach should be about 1700 cfs during this period. This flow target is the minimum flow during a dry year considered necessary to provide and maintain adequate roosting and feeding habitat for whooping cranes on the Platte River. Flows of this magnitude are not unusual at this time of year and are well below flood levels.

For more information on this release please contact:

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