

Setting Wildlife Goals & Objectives For Your Land

Habitat Extension Bulletin

No. 1

No matter what business you're in, good management is the name of the game. In today's agricultural markets, good management is the difference between success and failure. Management is commonly described as being made up of planning, organizing and controlling. Planning is the foundation upon which the other two management functions rest. It is a way of doing business and, properly implemented, provides a system for decision-making and evaluation within a framework of management objectives.

Planning has its own terminology. The jargon is not new, but the terms warrant clarification in their relationship to wildlife management or ranch management.

Program. Programs are aggregates of projects and activities that result in a product. You probably manage one or more programs in your operation. You may be managing a hay program, a cow-calf program or a deer program. Outputs, the desired products of your operation, are such things as tons of hay produced, number of calves shipped or number of deer harvested.

Goal. A goal is a statement of mission. Once formulated, goals reflect the policies to which you intend to adhere in the management of resources in your charge. They provide guidance while serving as a basis for relationships with governmental entities, sportsmen and private enterprise.

Objective. Objectives define the measurable results that you seek to accomplish. Unlike goals, they are specific targets for program accomplishment. They should be expressed in terms of desired outputs. It is very important they are quantified and are, thus, benchmarks for the evaluation of progress. When formulating objectives, be certain they are realistic, attainable and economically feasible.



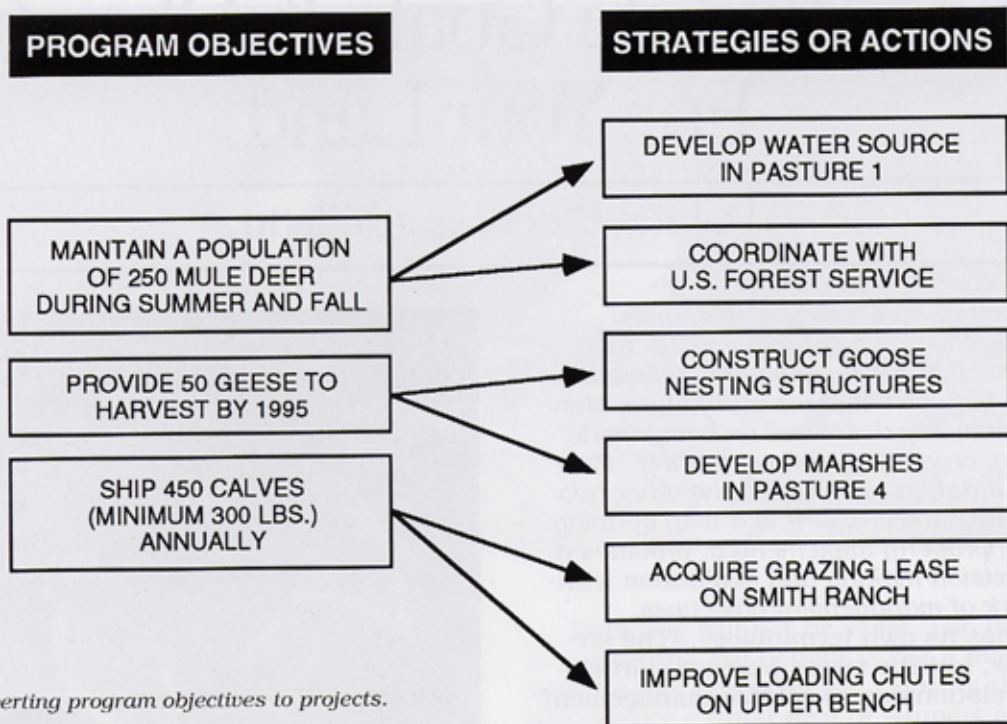


Figure 1. Converting program objectives to projects.

Strategy. When objectives have been determined, it can be expected that a variety of problems will be identified which stand in the way of their attainment. You must select approaches that will be used to overcome these problems and achieve your objectives. Strategies are the major actions you will take in pursuit of objectives.

An Integrated System

Planning for wildlife resources is an integrated system of management that involves continuous evaluation of objectives and monitoring of progress. It is perhaps best expressed as a series of four questions that form the basis of a planned management approach:

1. Where are we?
2. Where do we want to be?
3. How will we get there?
4. Did we make it?

Each of these questions is addressed by a particular phase of a planned management system.

Where are we? Every operation has inventories of various kinds and dimensions. These may range from animal population estimates to tally of supplies and equipment. They may or may not relate to the production outputs of the operation.

An important first step is to decide what needs to be inventoried and the level of detail required. This leads to the even more basic question of the desired outputs of the operation.

The answer to this question may not be readily apparent. Hopefully, no confusion will exist regarding what the operation is responsible for producing. Whether it's calves or hay or deer hunter recreation days, it's vital that you understand what business you are in.

Where do we want to be? Having addressed the question, "Where are we?," the next step is to decide where you want to be. This involves the formulation of goals, objectives and strategies. These combine to become a strategic plan. An important consideration is that this plan is structured for the programs you manage.

A complete strategic plan articulates the mission and policies of your operation, presents quantitative objectives and identifies long-term strategies for implementing them. It requires the manager to take a comprehensive look at everything he or she is doing and evaluate past and future activities. It provides a means for decision-making and for maintaining continuity of operations.

How will we get there? Writing objectives in a strategic plan is one thing, actually structuring your activities to achieve objectives is another. This is operational planning, the process which "gives life" to the strategic plan.

Operational planning converts objectives into projects and allocates real manpower and money towards priority projects (figure 1). Perhaps the most difficult aspect of implementing a planning system is the determination of priorities. Money and manpower are always limited, no matter how big or small your operation, so

choices must be made. No manager can hope to attain all his or her objectives at the same time. Priorities must be periodically re-evaluated as markets change, new opportunities unfold or new challenges arise. Operational planning provides help in deciding which programs to build, maintain or eliminate or which new programs to add.

Did we make it? The answer to this question is the feedback segment of planning. Objectives are meaningful only when there is a way to evaluate your progress toward them. If evaluation measures are not developed to monitor progress toward objectives, there is no real planning system.

Evaluation is the basis for "fine-tuning" the system. Not only is progress toward objectives measured, but any lack of progress is highlighted. This allows you to identify and correct problem areas and determine whether your objectives are realistic and attainable. Planning soon becomes synonymous with good operations—a way of managing more effectively with the emphasis on continual improvement

A Management Cycle

The preceding discussion presented the key components of planning. Although each was considered individually, they should not be viewed in that manner. Inventory, strategic

planning, operational planning and evaluation are not separate. They form a continuous cycle in the process of management planning (figure 2).

It would be difficult to over-stress the importance of viewing the four phases of planning as a continuum. Not to do so virtually assures failure of a planning effort. The most notable cause of failure has been the placement of emphasis on a single phase of the system.

Planning, if it is to be successful, must be approached as a cyclic phenomenon, a comprehensive system of management that continuously feeds back upon itself for evaluation, adjustment and fine-tuning. Indeed, in today's fast-paced society, one of the major benefits of a system of management planning is its adaptability.

A Way of Doing Business

The installation of a system of management planning involves the entire operation and is not a decision to be entered into lightly. Planning, of itself, accomplishes nothing. It requires dedicated and committed management to make it functional. Under such circumstances, planning has a great deal to offer. Properly implemented it will:

1. Promote action rather than reaction in management efforts. Planning will move the

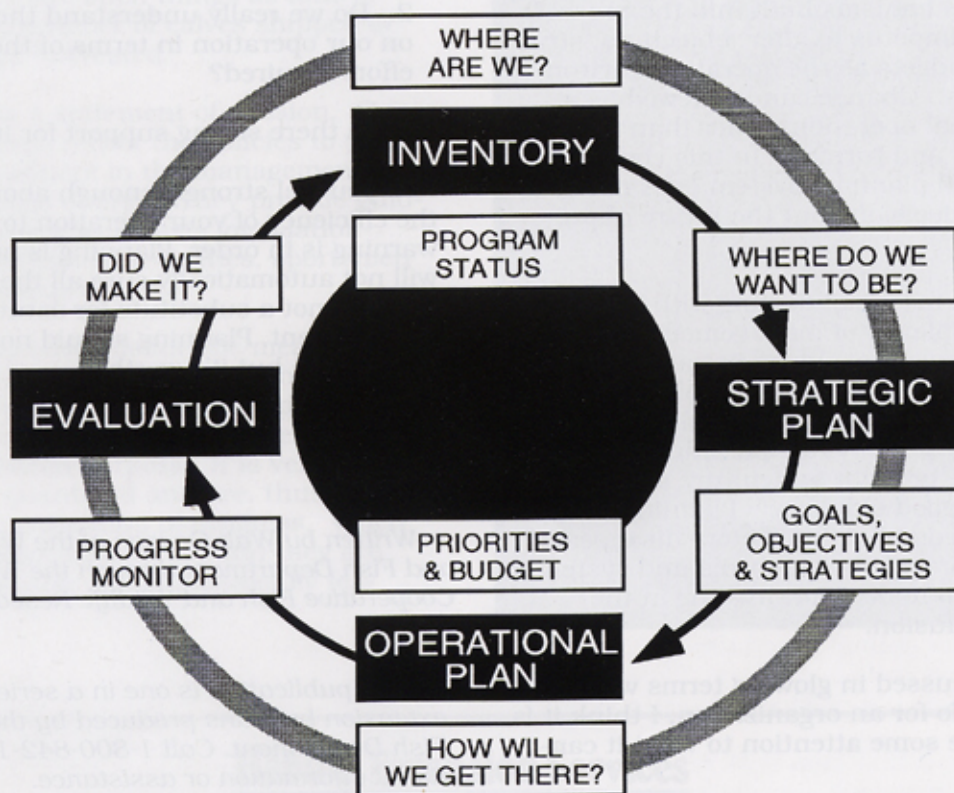


Figure 2. The elements of a planning system.



operation away from crisis management towards a more future-focused approach. There are goals and objectives to pursue and strategies to address regardless of the day's "brushfire."

2. Provide a means of dealing with the increasing rate of change. It has been estimated that more change has taken place in the last ten years than in all the years since this country was founded. Planning is a system designed to accommodate change. The feedback mechanisms built into the process provide the impetus to alter objectives, strategies and budgets as the operation environment evolves. Change can be viewed as a part of normal operation rather than an object of dread and turmoil. In this context, a well-designed planning system does not deal with future decisions but the future of present decisions.

3. Provide a means of dealing with the increased complexity of management. Any manager knows that this is not a simple job. Recent legislation, changing public attitudes, interagency agreements, political pressures, special interest lobbying and industrial development have brought agriculture a long way from those "good old days." Planning will not make these complicating factors disappear, but it does provide a structured and systematic approach to decision-making in the midst of confusion.

Having discussed in glowing terms what planning can do for an organization, I think it is only fair to give some attention to what it cannot do.

Planning will not be easy! The time required to realize the full benefit is not a matter of months but several years. During this time, it will require a great deal of support and hard work.

Before proceeding with the implementation of a planning system, you should ask:

1. Why do we want it? Is there a reason to believe it can improve our effectiveness as an operation?
2. Do we really understand the full impact on our operation in terms of the time and effort required?
3. Is there strong support for it?

If you feel strongly enough about improving the efficiency of your operation to proceed, some warning is in order. Planning is not a panacea. It will not automatically cure all the operation's ills. It is not a substitute for astute, progressive management. Planning should not be entered into lightly, but it's worth it.

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This publication is one in a series of habitat extension bulletins produced by the Game and Fish Department. Call 1-800-842-1934 for additional information or assistance.