

**Program Title: Minnesota Prairie Recovery Project**

**Request for Funding Form  
Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council  
Fiscal Year 2011**

**Program or Project Title: #17 Minnesota Prairie Recovery Project**

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	<b>Council Funding Request</b>	<b>Out-Year Projections of Needs</b>		
<b>Funds Requested (\$000s)</b>	<b>FY 2011</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>
Outdoor Heritage Fund	<b>\$6,286,298</b>	\$12,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000

**A. Summary**

Quality prairies, savannas and grasslands are Minnesota's most threatened habitat type. Less than 1% of Minnesota's original prairies remain (180,000 acres) and half of these have no protected status. Continued advances in agricultural and land management technologies present new threats to remaining grasslands, and conversion of these last tracts of native prairies and savannas threatens even the most marginal lands. Further, on the protected prairies and restored publicly-protected grasslands in Minnesota, restoration and enhancement activities are inadequate to keep these lands in optimal condition. Grasslands are being overtaken by undesirable woody vegetation and invasive species, reducing their value for grassland species like prairie chicken, prairie waterfowl, pheasants, and a myriad of non-game species.

Traditional tools for conserving and managing prairies and savannas will continue to be important, but conservationists are increasingly aware of their limitations. Loss of local tax revenues and economies, inadequate capacity to both protect and manage lands by public entities, the need to strategically focus conservation efforts and maximize collaboration, and a desire to create local conservation businesses require new models of prairie conservation.

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We propose a 15-year goal to provide protection to the remaining 90,000 acres of native prairie/savanna, a 20-year goal to restore and protect an additional 500,000 acres of diverse grasslands/savannas, and a 10-year goal to increase management capacity to annually manage 300,000 acres of grassland and savannas per year. This proposal takes the first steps to achieve these goals by initiating a comprehensive, coordinated and collaborative prairie conservation initiative. Annual investments by the LSOHC will be required to realize these ambitious outcomes.

When completed, the outcomes of this proposal will include: protection of 2000 acres of native prairie and/or savanna; restoration of 500 acres of diverse, local ecotype grassland; enhancement of 8000 acres of grassland/savanna by prescribed fire, invasive species removal, and/or conservation grazing; and development of a new conservation model in 3 parts of the state that will serve as a platform for accelerated conservation across Minnesota.

### **B. Background Information**

#### **1. What is the problem or opportunity being addressed?**

The conservation problems facing Minnesota's prairies, prairie potholes, grasslands and savannas are many, and include:

- a. Continued losses of native and restored grasslands due to economic pressures.
- b. Degradation of existing public grasslands and wetlands due to encroachment by woody vegetation and other invasive species that reduces their values to wildlife and people.
- c. Inadequate public access for hunting and fishing in agricultural parts of the state.
- d. Potential loss of local taxes and local incomes when land is acquired by public entities.
- e. Programmatic and staff limitations that reduce efficiencies in implementing diverse conservation programs across multiple partners.

The creation of the Outdoor Heritage Fund finally offers the resources needed to provide adequate conservation in Minnesota's prairie, prairie pothole and savanna landscapes. With the Council's support and the efforts of multiple partners, large and productive grassland landscapes can become a reality in Minnesota.

#### **2. What action will be taken?**

With the requested funding, and with other funds leveraged by this money and brought by other partners, the following actions and outcomes will be realized.

- a. A "Prairie Recovery Project Partnership" will be formed to include representatives of prairie conservation organizations, including: MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR), MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever (PF), MN Prairie Chicken Society (MPCS) and The Nature Conservancy. This group will identify 3 pilot focus areas and establish other guidelines for project implementation. Local workgroups will then be established to provide on-the-ground planning and coordination of conservation

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activities. Additional groups that will be contacted for input or representation will include: Ducks Unlimited, MN Waterfowl Association, MN Deer Hunters Association, Land Stewardship Project, MN Cattleman's Association, local livestock groups, MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and MN Farmer's Union.

- b. Long-term protection of an estimated 2000 acres of existing and restorable grassland, prairie pothole complex, and/or savanna to supplement existing efforts. Lands will be held by The Nature Conservancy subject to a legal interest held by the State of Minnesota. Lands will be open to public hunting and fishing as provided in the Constitution, and basic developments will be implemented (boundary signage, parking lot). Protection efforts will be coordinated with other partner protection programs (e.g., DNR Wildlife Management Area and Prairie Bank programs).
- c. A separate and discrete internal fund will be established by The Nature Conservancy to cover ongoing land-management costs. Income generated by agricultural leases (grazing, haying and/or cropping), earned interest, public contributions and donations will be held in this account and used to pay for property taxes and ongoing management costs.
- d. Restoration of an estimated 500 acres of diverse, local-ecotype grassland or grassland/wetland complex (part of the above protected acres) as a supplement to existing efforts. Preference will be given to local producers and contractors for provision of seed and establishment of prairies, to promote creation of local conservation-oriented businesses.
- e. Enhancement of an estimated 8000 acres of grassland complex on public and Conservancy lands ("protected conservation lands") as a supplement to existing efforts. Management techniques will include prescribed fire, conservation grazing and/or haying, removal of woody vegetation, and control of exotic species. Much of this work will be accomplished by contract. Maximum use will be made of MN Conservation Crew (MCC) staff, otherwise, local businesses will be solicited.
- f. On-the-ground staff provided by this grant will form and lead local coordination and implementation teams; identify protection, restoration and enhancement needs and opportunities within the focus area; work with DNR and FWS staff to delineate conservation projects on public lands; coordinate deployment of contract and staff resources to protected conservation lands; contact and work with private landowners to coordinate agricultural activities/leases on appropriate protected conservation lands (e.g., haying, grazing, cropping); educate lessees on appropriate conservation grazing/haying practices; supervise management of lands acquired above; plan and conduct prescribed burns; secure other funding for conservation practices; and other activities related to prairie conservation in the focus areas. We propose 3 "term" biologists ("prairie managers") be hired to coordinate activities in focus areas. These will be hired and employed by the Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, or another non-government partner, but are expected to be

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located in a DNR or FWS office. This is intended to foster better coordination and collaboration among partners, while ensuring enhancement needs on public lands are being specifically addressed.

- g. Contracts will be let to provide a high level of enhancement activities to new and existing protected conservation lands, greatly expanding current capacity. These activities will improve the habitat value of public lands that are not currently receiving adequate management treatment, while simultaneously providing jobs for MCC and local businesses. Activities will include removal of undesirable woody vegetation, identification and treatment of invasive species infestations, removal of abandoned fences and/or other structures, and related restoration/enhancement activities.
- h. One part-time project coordinator will oversee implementation of the above activities, and provide administrative support for budget monitoring and reporting. Significant marketing and media outreach will be provided by the Conservancy to highlight the goals and accomplishments of the project to local and statewide constituents, as well as elected officials.

### 3. Who will take action and when?

The Nature Conservancy will implement this project as soon as funding is approved. A projected timeline for each of the above actions is presented below.

Action	Q1Y1	Q2Y1	Q3Y1	Q4Y1	Q1Y2	Q2Y2	Q3Y2	Q4Y2
Partnership established, meeting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Coordinator appointed		X						
Prairie managers hired/working			X	X	X	X	X	X
Prairies acquired			300ac	300ac	300ac	300ac	300ac	500ac
Restoration activities						X	X	X
Enhancement activities		X		X	X	X		X
Marketing & outreach		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

### 4. How will you coordinate this program with the other Constitutional Funding?

It is a principal objective of this effort that programs and resources of other conservation partners be most efficiently coordinated on-the-ground. To that end, coordination will be fostered by:

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- a. Other organizations receiving Outdoor Heritage Funds (e.g., DNR, BWSR) will be part of the Prairie Recovery Project Partnership, to identify available resources, opportunities for collaboration, and best programs for particular situations (e.g., best protection tool for a particular tract of land). This coordination will occur at both the statewide and field level.
- b. The Conservancy will continue to work with elected officials and the Clean Water Council to secure Clean Water funds for non-point source pollution reduction efforts, that can provide money for Wetlands Reserve Program and similar mutually-beneficial habitat conservation programs.
- c. While timing precluded a joint proposal this year, we are hopeful that there can be a joint Prairie Recovery Project proposal representing multiple partners. This would offer the best opportunity for coordination.

### **5. What specific habitat changes will occur if this item is funded? Be specific about and list multiple benefits if they exist.**

Protection efforts won't immediately change habitats, but will allow public access. Once prescribed fire and management capacity is engaged, however, there will be substantial habitat improvements. Prescribed fire and conservation grazing/haying are known to improve prairies and other grasslands by reducing undesirable woody vegetation and certain non-native cool-season grasses. These practices also improve the physical structure of grasslands (height and density), and can improve diversity in grasslands that haven't been properly managed. Invasive species, like spotted knapweed, purple loosestrife and leafy spurge, can be very aggressive in establishing dominance in grasslands, essentially reducing the ability of desirable grasses and forbs to compete. Once invasive species have taken over, the habitat quality (and grazing/haying quality) of any grassland is dramatically reduced. Finally, reconstruction of diverse grasslands and grassland/wetland complexes (500 acres proposed here) will provide that increment of additional habitat but, more importantly, these will be located to maximize synergistic benefits of existing grassland complexes. By strategically locating these restorations, we will provide travel corridors for wildlife, buffer existing grasslands from off-site impacts (e.g., overspray of herbicides from adjacent croplands), and increase nesting habitat for ground-nesting waterfowl in wetland areas where uplands are lacking. Other benefits of this project include:

- Better habitat for game and nongame species.
- Enhanced natural processes due to larger grassland landscapes (e.g., better nest success with less "edge," better diversity).
- Improved ability of lands to hold precipitation, reducing runoff.
- Improved cleansing & infiltration of precipitation to groundwater.
- Improved ability of lands to clean runoff, improving surface water quality.
- Enhanced and increased ability of vegetation to sequester carbon.
- Increased access for hunting, fishing and other compatible uses.
- Maintenance of local economies through compatible use of lands; potential uses for grazing, haying, biomass and others.

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- Retention of local tax revenues.
- Sustaining local business, providing jobs via MCC and private business.
- Ability to attract and secure additional funding from other sources.

**6. When do you expect to see these habitat changes?**

As per table above, habitat changes will begin in the second quarter of the first year of funding. Initially, these will be primarily enhancement activities (woody vegetation removal, invasive species control), and preparation for subsequent year prescribed fire and restoration activities. By second quarter of year 2, all restoration and enhancement activities will be in full swing. Restorations will be fully functional by end of year 3.

**7. Will your Outdoor Heritage Fund dollar request complete the planned accomplishments?**

☒ **YES**

☐ **NO**

**If not, how will you finance completion?**

A very unique aspect of this proposal is the provision for earning income from compatible agricultural activities on acquired lands, the establishment of a management fund from these earnings, and the use of this fund to pay for taxes and certain management activities into the future. This is a model employed by the Conservancy, but is not in wide use among public agencies. We propose this as an experimental model, to investigate its feasibility in a public arena. If successful, this may help resolve several issues that the Council repeatedly faces: long-term management costs, payment in lieu of taxes, and local opposition to public land ownership when local income opportunities are lost.

**8. How will you pay for the maintenance of the accomplishments?**

This project proposes a new conservation model, one where income generated by the protected conservation lands acquired with Outdoor Heritage Funds (OHF) provide funding for property taxes and long-term management costs. Unlike forestlands, prairies require much more frequent periodic enhancement – annual monitoring and control of invasive species, and regular treatment with prescribed fire or haying/grazing. This proposal also provides for treatment of existing public lands, those without long-term enhancement funding strategies, and it is anticipated that future OHF funds (and other conservation funds) will be required to re-treat them in the future until a similar stand-alone funding model can be established.

**9. How does this action directly restore, enhance, or protect prairies, wetlands, forests or habitat for fish, game, and wildlife?**

This proposal directly protects an estimated 2000 acres of prairie, prairie/wetland complex and savanna; it directly restores an estimated 500 acres of prairie and prairie/wetland complex; and it enhances an estimated 8000 acres of prairies, prairie/wetland complex and savannas. Both the restoration and enhancement activities will improve the lands for game and other wildlife by

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increasing the composition, physical structure, size, juxtaposition with other conservation lands, and diversity of the grasslands.

**10. If you are restoring or enhancing property, is the activity on permanently protected land?**

  X   YES

       NO

**If yes briefly describe the kind of protection.**

Four types of protected conservation lands are proposed for potential enhancement under this project:

- a. Fee-title public lands including Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA), Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) and Aquatic Management Areas (AMA).
- b. Private lands under perpetual conservation easement held by a public agency, including Prairie Bank, Wetlands Reserve Program and FWS grassland easements.
- c. Lands acquired with OHF funding and held by the Conservancy or another non-profit organization. These lands are subject to Constitutional and statutory provisions and subject to a legal state interest. This is a very strong permanent protection.
- d. Protected conservation lands owned by the Conservancy or other non-profit conservation organization. These lands are held and managed subject to state and federal laws relating to non-profits, are held for conservation purposes, and provide various types of public access. In the case of The Nature Conservancy, our internal policies require that conservation values be protected through appropriate restrictions (such as a retained conservation easement) prior to transfer to a private entity.

By far, the principal lands that will be impacted will be those lands identified in “a” and “c,” above. Since the OHF funds will supplement existing programs, traditional sources will also be used to create a larger pool of funding and management resources.

**11. How will you ensure transparency and provide information about your work and use of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars.**

All OHF funds will be held in separate and discrete accounts to allow for clear accounting. All Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) will be stringently followed. Following approval of a work plan and grant agreement, all funds will be requested on a reimbursement basis. Reimbursement requests will provide a clear accounting of expenses on a form satisfactory to the Council. As required by law, all accounting and accomplishment reporting will be provided in a form satisfactory for use on the Legislative Coordinating Committee website.

In addition to the above, statutorily required accounting, the Conservancy proposes the following:

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- a. At least semi-annually, at meetings of the Prairie Recovery Project Partnership, the status of funding and leverage will be discussed in detail among all project partners.
- b. At the beginning of the project, a marketing plan will be developed that will identify key audiences (e.g., landowners, local units of government, elected officials) and needed information. This will include elements like project fact sheets, media outreach and annual reports. The Conservancy will provide the technical and financial resources needed for this effort.
- c. Members of the Partnership will be requested to provide informational materials on their websites and in their organizational publications.
- d. Other suggestions for ensuring transparency and accountability are welcomed.

**12. Why will this strategy work?**

There are no new tactics in this proposal; all of these practices are being used by one or more organizations already at work in Minnesota. What is new here is the effort to closely coordinate activities, to bring practices that work in the private sector into the public sector, and to greatly accelerate the use of conservation practices. The conservation community has demonstrated that these protection, restoration and enhancement activities work, but to truly reach the level of conservation that is needed for a comprehensive prairie recovery project, partners must work with a plan, with an open mind for innovation, and with appropriate new tools. We believe this project sets the table for launching the required effort. Finally, by supporting local opportunities to develop grass-based businesses (grazing, biofuels, etc.), we believe there will be reduced incentives for conversion of grasslands on unprotected private lands (i.e., grasslands will be perceived as having economic value).

**13. Who might make decisions that assist or work against achieving the expected impact program?**

In order for this project to deliver its maximum potential, support is required of: the Council, the Governor, the Legislature and Congress, other public and private conservation organizations, landowners, agricultural trade groups, local units of government, the media, hunting and angling groups, rural fire departments and private donors. If any of these work in opposition, the challenges for implementation grow. Because we believe this initiative truly provides a “win-win” for conservation and other public interests, we believe broad support can be won. A transparent, open project, with a good outreach and marketing element, will be critical to success. Uncontrollable risks that could diminish success include strong commodity prices (or federal policies) that encourage conversion of grasslands and high land prices that have a similar effect and reduce conservation outcomes for a given dollar.

**14. If this is acquisition of land, has the local government formally approved the acquisition?**

\_\_\_\_\_ YES

\_\_\_X\_\_\_ NO

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Specific tracts have not yet been identified, pending identification of focus areas and creation of local coordinating groups.

**15. If this is fee simple acquisition of land, is the land free of any other permanent protection such as a conservation easement?**

☒ **X** **YES**

☐ **NO**

Priority will be given to protecting lands that are currently unprotected.

**16. If this is an easement acquisition, will the eased land be open for public use?**

N/A – no easements proposed.

☐ **YES**

☐ **NO**

**If Yes what kind of use?**

**17. If easement acquisition, will the easement be a permanent conservation easement as described in MS 2009, Chapter 84C.01, specifically protecting the natural resource values of real property forever?**

N/A – no easements proposed

☐ **YES**

☐ **NO**

**18. If you are proposing funding for a new or ongoing program how long into the future do you expect this program to operate?**

**>20**  **Years**

A first chore for the Partnership will be to develop a long-range plan for prairie conservation that can comprehensively address implementation of protection, restoration and enhancement. Protection efforts will be most prominent for up to 20 years; restoration and enhancement efforts will be required indefinitely. We anticipate the need for a coordinated conservation program to similarly continue indefinitely. Additional funding requests to the Council are expected for the duration of the Legacy Amendment.

**19. Which planning sections will you work in? Check all that apply in the list below.**

☐ Northern Forest

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☒ Forest/Prairie Transition  
☐ Southeast Forest  
☒ Prairie  
☐ Metropolitan Urbanizing Area

**20. Does the request address an urgent conservation opportunity that will be lost if not immediately funded?**

☒ **YES** ☐ **NO**  
**If yes, please explain.**

Once plowed, prairies are never completely recovered. Acceleration of prairie protection efforts is critical before opportunities are lost.

**21. Does the request restore and/or enhance habitat on existing state-owned Wildlife or Aquatic Management Areas or Scientific and Natural Areas?**

☒ **YES** ☐ **NO**  
**If Yes, list the names of the AMAs, WMAs and/or SNAs and the acres to be restored and/or enhanced.**

Specific sites will be determined once focus areas are selected and local coordinating groups are established. We estimate at least 8000 acres of protected lands will be restored and/or enhanced.

**22. Is this request based on assessment through a science based strategic planning and evaluation model similar to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model?**

☒ **YES** ☐ **NO**  
**If yes explain the model briefly.**

There are at least 3 prioritization tools that have been or will be used in this project. First, a 1998 ecological assessment conducted by The Nature Conservancy for the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecoregion identifies core opportunity areas to conserve functioning grassland landscapes in Minnesota. Second, selection of focus areas will be based upon MN County Biological Survey (CBS) data that identifies 38 core prairie areas in the state. Finally, and in conjunction with a project proposed for funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Habitat Assessment and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) will be requested to develop site-specific conservation optimization models.

**23. Explain the scientific foundation for your project, and the benefits it will produce.**

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Conservation principles of this project are based upon two complementary perspectives – maintaining viability of prairie landscapes and improving populations of grassland breeding birds (e.g., mallard, prairie chicken, bobolink, pheasant).

Accepted conservation strategies to conserve viable prairies and grassland complexes are described by Samson, et al (2003; online at: [www.fs.fed.us/r1/projects/wildlife-ecology/GreatPlains.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/projects/wildlife-ecology/GreatPlains.pdf)), and include:

- 1) identify areas large enough to sustain an ecological system with all of its biodiversity
- 2) reverse the significant losses in area of native grasslands
- 3) ensure restoration matches the grassland that existed previously at that site
- 4) refocus the profession of range management
- 5) establish a more meaningful agency design for grassland and natural resource management.

Breeding Bird Survey results indicate that grassland bird populations are declining at a faster rate than any other group of North American birds. In recognition of this fact, the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, a conservation partnership of states, non-governmental organizations and federal agencies, has adopted a primary goal of reversing the declining trend of grassland birds.

One factor thought to be adversely impacting grassland birds on their breeding grounds is the continued fragmentation of their habitat. Grassland Bird Conservation Areas (GBCAs) are priority areas for grassland protection and enhancement that are thought to provide suitable habitat for many or all priority grassland bird species in the tall grass prairie portion of the Prairie Pothole Region. Protocols for delineating GBCAs were developed in cooperation with the HAPET office in USFWS Region 6, Bismarck, North Dakota. (from: [://www.fws.gov/midwest/HAPET/GrasslandBirdMaps](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/HAPET/GrasslandBirdMaps) ).

The Bird Conservation Area concept was developed as a model for prioritizing conservation areas for declining bird species. GBCAs were designed for grassland nesting birds and based on the following assumptions: 1) larger patches are better due to an inherent preference for larger patches by some grassland birds (a.k.a., area sensitivity), 2) patches with minimal edge (round or square shapes) are better due to fewer edges that may harbor predators, 3) trees are a hostile habitat for grassland nesting birds because they provide habitat and a travel corridor for mammalian predators and perches for avian predators, 4) productivity within a patch depends on habitat (compatible, neutral, hostile) in the surrounding landscape.

GBCAs were originally defined as an 800 ha (2000 ac) grassland core surrounded by a 4,000 ha (10,000 ac) area that contained at least 20% grassland. Since most of the tallgrass prairie has already been extensively fragmented, and recovery is usually in small patches, this definition a GBCA was too restrictive to be useful throughout most of the tallgrass prairie region. Grassland bird experts of the Prairie Pothole Region agreed that using a tiered approach would be more productive. It was assumed that the needs of the most sensitive species could be met by the largest GBCAs, while birds with fewer

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restrictions could thrive in smaller grass patches. (from: [://www.fws.gov/midwest/HAPET/Documents/FactSheetGBCAs1.](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/HAPET/Documents/FactSheetGBCAs1.)).

The principles identified for conserving prairie landscapes and the principles identified for conserving grassland birds are completely complementary and widely accepted by prairie conservationists. These will guide implementation of the Prairie Recovery Project.

Multiple benefits will be derived and have already been summarized in item #5, above. Use of these principles will help create larger landscape complexes than traditionally have been constructed, emulating the Conservancy's success at the Glacial Ridge project in Polk county, MN. There, a 24,000 acre protection and restoration project has greatly increased wildlife habitat, has restored surface and groundwater supplies and quality, has reduced surface water runoff to the Red River, has created economic stimulus as a local tourist destination, and has retained the support of local units of government due to retention of tax base.

### **24. How do you set priorities? *(Be sure to list the criteria you use and the weight you give each one.)***

Prioritization and prioritization criteria vary with the conservation tactic being employed (i.e., protection, restoration, enhancement). Because this is a collaborative effort involving multiple partners, priorities and criteria will be established at both the state and local level by respective coordinating groups. Likely criteria for each of these tactics include:

1. Protection: location/proximity to other habitats, location/proximity to other protected lands, presence of rare/endangered species, imminence of conversion, size, cost, and likelihood for leveraged funding.
2. Restoration: feasibility/likelihood of success, location, cost, availability of seed, and availability of restoration technical assistance.
3. Enhancement: urgency/time since last enhancement, feasibility of success, accessibility, availability of enhancement technical assistance, cost, proximity to other habitats and partnership benefits.

### **C. Relationship to the *Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan* and Other Published Resource Management Plans**

This project implements strategies identified in at least 5 credible plans, as identified below.

1. MN Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan. The strategic framework of this plan has 5 elements in its "Habitat" section: integrated planning, critical land protection, land and water restoration and protection, (identification of) sustainable practices, and (provision of) economic incentives for sustainable practices. Further, while the plan does not go into great detail with respect to prairie conservation, it clearly states that "protection of priority land habitats" is a vital practice, and prairies clearly fall here.

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2. Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare. The primary objective identified in the MN DNR's plan is to "stabilize and increase populations of "species in greatest conservation need (SGCN)". In the prairies of Minnesota, strategies to achieve this goal include:
  - a. Support incentives that avoid conversion of grasslands into row crops where SGCN occur.
  - b. Use mowing, cutting woody vegetation, prescribed fire, or careful use of herbicides to prevent the invasion of grasslands by trees and shrubs.
  - c. Lengthen the cutting rotations for hay; avoid early-season mowing.
  - d. Use light to moderate, rotational grazing programs to benefit SGCN
  - e. Prevent fragmentation of grassland habitat.
  - f. Avoid soil compaction in areas occupied by mammal SGCN.
  - g. Increase native plant species components
  - h. Control spread of invasive species to adjacent native-dominated sites.This project proposes to address all but item "f" above.
3. The Nature Conservancy's Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecoregional Plan (1998). This plan identifies key conservation targets, geographic emphasis areas, threats to native plant and animal communities, and key strategies to mitigate these threats. The proposal is a solid step in the implementation of this plan.
4. DNR's Pheasant Plan. This proposal is in full support of the Pheasant Plan goal to add 1.5 million acres of undisturbed grassland to the state by 2025.
5. DNR's Waterfowl Plan. This proposal is in full support of the state Long-range Duck Recovery Plan to add 2 million acres of habitat to the state by 2025. It also utilizes establishment of complexes, as per the plan, to achieve multiple conservation synergies and benefits.

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<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 11</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 12</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 13</b>
<b>Personnel</b>	\$276,189	\$287,236	\$0
<b>Contracts</b>	\$108,000	\$216,000	\$500,000
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies</b>	\$216,640	\$61,600	\$0
<b>Fee Acquisition</b>	\$1,605,000	\$2,605,000	\$0
<b>Easement Acquisition</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Easement Stewardship</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Professional Services</b>	\$116,700	\$192,300	\$0
<b>Travel</b>	\$45,310	\$46,322	\$0
<b>Additional Budget Items</b>	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$2,372,839	\$3,413,459	\$500,000

**E. Personnel Details** *In the space below list the names, titles and anticipated program funds to be paid by this recommendation. If you will need to fill a position just list the title and amount.*

<b>Title</b>	<b>2-Year OHF Amount</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Term biologist (3FTE)	\$317,016	New positions
Protection specialist (1/2 FTE)	\$59,976	New position
Burn crew (boss, 5 crew; 10 weeks)	\$107,893	New position; could reconfigure to use existing burn bosses
Program coordinator (1/2 FTE)	\$78,540	New position

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**F. All Leverage** In the table below list the sources and amounts of leverage you anticipate by fiscal year you anticipate receiving it. Include state and non-state leverage.

Source of Leverage	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
TNC	\$424,529	\$433,019	\$441,680
RIM-CHP/TNC credits	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$300,000
NRCS EQIP	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
LCCMR Prairie Project	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$0
Nat. Fish & Wildl. Fdn.	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$0
N. Am. Wetl. Cons. Act	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$889,529</b>	<b>\$1,048,019</b>	<b>\$941,680</b>

**Grand total: at least \$2,879,228 anticipated additional leverage.**

**G. Outcomes:**

- 1) In the first table below, quantify the outcomes you plan to achieve with the recommended funds.
- 2) In the second table show list the sections where outcomes will occur.
- 3) In the third table, allocate your recommended funds to each cell with outcomes listed in table 1.
- 4) In the fourth table show the leverage to be applied to each cell with outcomes listed in table 1. and
- 5) If you have any outcomes listed in the "protect" row in table 1, account for them according to the type of acquisition and PILT status in table 5

Table 1 Accomplish- ments	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore	75	425		
Protect	300	1700		
Enhance	1200	6800		

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<b>Table 2 Sections Impacted and Impact Quantifier</b>	<b>Wetlands</b>	<b>Prairies</b>	<b>Forests</b>	<b>Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife</b>
<b>Restore</b>	<i>Prairie (80%), Forest /Prairie Transition(20%)</i>	<i>Prairie (80%), Forest/Prairie Transition (20%)</i>		
<b>Protect</b>	<i>Prairie (50%), Forest/Prairie Transition (50%)</i>	<i>Prairie (50%), Forest/Prairie Transition (50%)</i>		
<b>Enhance</b>	<i>Prairie (30%), Forest/Prairie Transition (70%)</i>	<i>Prairie (30%), Forest/Prairie Transition (70%)</i>		

<b>Table 3 Recommend Fund Allocation</b>	<b>Wetlands</b>	<b>Prairies</b>	<b>Forests</b>	<b>Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife</b>
<b>Restore</b>	<i>\$75,000</i>	<i>\$425,000</i>		
<b>Protect</b>	<i>\$668,846</i>	<i>\$3,790,130</i>		
<b>Enhance</b>	<i>\$199,098</i>	<i>\$1,128,233</i>		



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<b>Table 4 Leverage \$</b>	<b>Wetlands</b>	<b>Prairies</b>	<b>Forests</b>	<b>Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife</b>
<b>Restore</b>	0	0		
<b>Protect</b>	\$344,884	\$1,954,344		
<b>Enhance</b>	87,000	\$493,000		

<b>Table 5 Acquisition Data</b>	<b>Wetlands</b>	<b>Prairies</b>	<b>Forests</b>	<b>Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife</b>
<b>Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability</b>	0	0		
<b>Acquired in Fee without State PILT Liability</b>	300	1700		
<b>Permanent Easement</b>	0	0		

**H. Accomplishment Time Table**

(Proposer's note: see timetable in Section 3 for more info)

	<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Protection</b>	First 300 acres acquired	Mar., '11	Ac/protected
	Additional 300 acres acquired	Jun., '11	Ac/protected
	Additional 300 acres acquired	Sep., '11	Ac/protected
	Additional 300 acres acquired	Dec., '11	Ac/protected
	Additional 300 acres acquired	Mar., '12	Ac/protected
	Final 500 acres acquired	Jun., '12	Ac/protected
<b>Restoration</b>	Restoration initiated on 250 acres	Sep., '12	Ac/restored
	Restoration initiated on next 250 acres	Mar., '13	Ac/restored
	Restorations completed	Jun., '13	Ac/restored
<b>Enhancement</b>	100 acres woody veg. control	Dec., '10	Ac/enhanced
	2500 acres prescribed fire	Jun., '11	Ac/enhanced

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400 acres invasives control	Sep., '11	Ac/enhanced
200 acres woody veg. control	Dec., '11	Ac/enhanced
4500 acres prescribed fire	Jun., '12	Ac/enhanced
300 acres invasives control	Jun., '12	Ac/enhanced
<b>Coordination</b>		
Statewide partnership organized	Sep., '10	Coordination
Local areas selected & organized	Dec., '10	Coordination

**I. Relationship to Your Current Budget**

OHF funds will be additive to the Conservancy's budget. The annual Conservancy budget for Minnesota, raised almost entirely from private sources, will help implement the activities in this proposal. Conservancy operations will be prioritized towards implementation of this project.

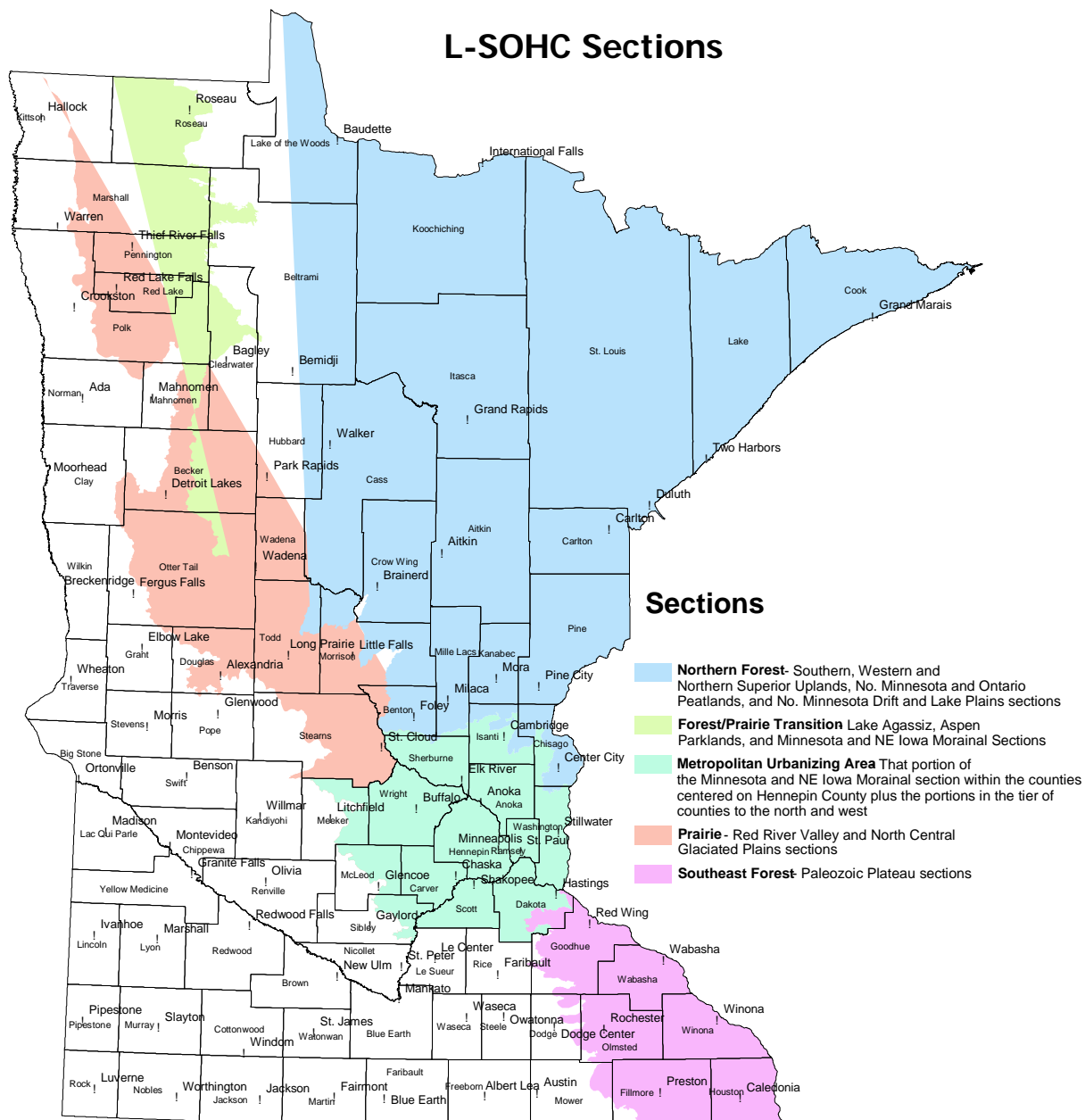
**J. How Will the Habitat Improvements Be Sustained?**

Restoration activities will include grassland and wetland restorations. The prairie pothole landscape is sustained through the regular application of appropriate disturbance, including fire, grazing and haying. A chronic problem for land managers is securing adequate funding to do these conservation practices as frequently as needed (e.g., every 1-4 years). A primary purpose of this proposal is to establish a collaborative and coordinated partnership that can accelerate the application of these management techniques across multiple landscapes. On existing protected conservation lands, an annual infusion of funding will be required unless or until this income/funding model can be more widely applied. For new lands acquired under this proposal, we will establish a new funding model by attempting to secure management funds by generating compatible income from acquired lands. In addition to the conservation value of planned haying and grazing, the income generated by these agricultural leases can help pay for management activities and property taxes. This model has been used on other Conservancy lands, and this project will evaluate whether it is feasible on other types of public/private protected conservation lands.

**K. Attach a list of your projects listing their county location and edit the map of Minnesota on the next page to show each project as a symbol.**

The specific focus areas the Partnership will be working in will be identified once funding is secured. The focus areas will generally correspond to prairie concentration areas as identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey (attachment A). The Partnership will select 3 of these areas based upon partner priorities and capacity, perceived receptivity to the project by landowners and cattle groups, additional funding that may be available in the geographic area, and known protection and enhancement opportunities.

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# Minnesota's Remaining Native Prairie 100 Years After the Public Land Survey

Native Prairie Recorded 1847-1908 (Shown in Yellows and Tans)  
Remaining Native Prairie Mapped 1987-2008 (Shown in Red)

Attachment A. Prairie concentration  
areas in Minnesota.

