

Main Request for Funding Form

**Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
Fiscal Year 2013**

Program or Project Title: Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Land Acquisition

Funds Requested: \$3,500,000

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[.fws.gov/midwest/NorthernTallgrassPrairie/](http://fws.gov/midwest/NorthernTallgrassPrairie/)

County Location:

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Northern Forest Forest/Prairie Transition Southeast Forest
 Prairie Metro/Urban

Activity Type:

- Protect - Fee Protect - Easement Protect - Other

 Restore Enhance

Priority Resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands Forests Prairie Habitat

Project Abstract

The Nature Conservancy and the US Fish and Wildlife Service will permanently protect native prairie and associated wetland complexes in western Minnesota by purchasing fee title properties and/or habitat easements.

Project Narrative

The Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge was established to preserve, restore, and manage a portion of the remaining critical northern tallgrass prairie habitat and associated habitats at widespread locations throughout the western Minnesota and northwestern Iowa historic range. Only 5 percent of the original tallgrass prairie remains for preservation consideration throughout the entire historic tallgrass prairie range. Native prairie declines of 99.9% and 98.7% have occurred in Iowa and Minnesota, respectively. Grassland dependent bird species have shown steeper, more consistent, and geographically more widespread declines than any other group of North American birds.

The number of acres purchased annually has been limited due to funding shortfalls since the establishment of this refuge. The current land acquisition budget cannot keep up with the landowner interest in this program. This funding will allow US Fish and Wildlife Service to better meet refuge goals and objectives to protect this vanishing habitat.

The Nature Conservancy will work closely with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to review potential properties within the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area. These properties will be ranked by Service field staff who will work with TNC personnel to permanently protect these tracts.

Lands and easements purchased through this program by The Nature Conservancy will be transferred to the US Fish and Wildlife Service and will become units of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge to be owned and managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The majority of the lands protected will consist of native prairie, however, restoration of wetlands and grasslands will also be completed where needed.

Design and scope of work

Only 235,000 acres of the original tallgrass prairie remain in Minnesota. Of these 115,000 acres lack any form of legal protection. Grassland dependent bird species have shown steeper, more consistent, and geographically widespread declines than any other group of North American birds. TNC will utilize the funding for the purchase of approximately 1,200 acres of native prairie in western Minnesota. Because of the nature of parcel ownership, some of this acreage will likely include smaller areas of converted lands needing grassland or wetland restoration. Fee title tracts will be the top priority for the funding. The funding will be used for the purchase of habitat easements if the funding cannot be used entirely on fee title tracts. Lands protected will eventually be transferred to the Service and will become units of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR.

The purpose of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR is to preserve, restore, and manage a portion of the remaining critical northern tallgrass prairie habitat and associated habitats at widespread locations throughout the western Minnesota and northwestern Iowa historic range.

Planning

This project correlates well with the recommendations of ***The Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan***. Habitat Protection 1 (pages 63-67) states “Protect priority land habitats, while Habitat Recommendation 5 (pages 80-81) states “Restore land, wetlands, and wetland-associated watersheds.” This project will protect and restore priority native grasslands and their associated wetlands important to grassland dependent wildlife, especially grassland and wetland birds. This proposal will also implement the following habitat recommendations within the plan:

1. Habitat Recommendation 3 (pages 74-78) “Improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation” - All fee title lands acquired and restored will be open to the public for hunting and other activities allowed under the National Wildlife Refuge System.
2. Habitat Recommendation 7 (pages 84-87) “Keep water on the landscape” – by protecting and restoring grasslands and wetlands, this proposal will help keep water on the landscape (permanent vegetation restoration).

This project is also fully in accord with the **Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan**. This plan was the result of a joint planning process that included all of the major prairie conservation agencies and organizations in the state. The Prairie Plan calls for the protection of all native prairie in Minnesota (totaling 31,400 acres in fee and 73,500 acres of easement) within the Prairie Region. The 1,200 +/- acres protected in this project will reduce the amount of unprotected native prairie by a significant amount. Priority will be given to tracts located within the 36 identified prairie core areas or within habitat complexes along corridors linking the core areas.

The need for this project is also outlined in the ***Northern Tallgrass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area Final Environmental Impact Statement***, US Fish and Wildlife Service 1998. The primary purpose of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie HPA is to preserve and enhance the remaining remnant tracts of northern tallgrass prairie and aspen parklands habitats within Iowa and Minnesota.

A secondary purpose is to link existing prairie tracts together (Federal, state, tribal, private organization, and private landowner ownerships) into larger blocks and to buffer remnant prairie. This will establish larger, more viable units of managed prairie and allow travel corridors for wildlife. Future prairie restoration efforts by the US Fish and Wildlife Service could help link existing prairies together.

The basic goals of the Service’s Strategic Habitat Conservation are: 1) accomplish landscape level planning based on quantifiable objectives, 2) implement planned actions, then, 3) evaluate your actions to see if they are addressing the objectives. This is what the Service’s HAPET (Habitat and Population Evaluation Team) office in Fergus Falls does for the Service and its partners in the prairies of Minnesota. The Service’s HAPET office does landscape level planning to meet specific wildlife objectives and conducts evaluation activities (i.e. 4sq.mi. surveys), to see if Service/partners’ activities are meeting Service objectives. The planned actions to be implemented through this grant application are the acquisition of native prairie remnants and the restoration of converted wetland and grassland habitats. Based on HAPET evaluation strategies, modeling predictions can be made on the numbers of nesting waterfowl, grassland nesting birds, and pheasants the acres affected by this grant application will produce. Besides the obvious wildlife benefits, once restored, the lands acquired through this grant will provide additional water quality, groundwater recharge, and flood abatement benefits.

By purchasing in fee title or through habitat easements 1,200 +/- acres, this project will meet the LSOHC Section Priorities 1. *Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes;* and 2. *Protect, enhance and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests and oak savanna.*

Although we will strive to acquire lands that already have healthy grassland and wetland complexes, in some cases, restoration and/or enhancement is needed. Restoration and/or enhancement needs will be determined on a case by case basis. In such cases, the US Fish and Wildlife Service land manager will decide which of the current techniques and technologies will be used when restoring the grassland and wetlands of these areas. Grasslands needing restoration will be seeded with local ecotype native grass seed mixtures. Restoration efforts will meet the LSOHC Sections Priority 3 – *“Convert agricultural land to wetland/upland to protect, enhance, or restore existing habitat complexes.....”*; Priority 6- *“Protect expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands”*, if the CRP acres are planted to native grass mixture; and Priority 7 – *“Protect, enhance and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success.”*

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds

No other Constitutional Funds will be used on to this project.

Relationship to Current Organizational Budget

This project will greatly accelerate conservation activities in prairie regions of Minnesota. Since 2000, the Service has typically received annual appropriations of approximately \$500,000 in federal Land and Water Conservation Funds. This annual funding has allowed the Service to purchase smaller sized tracts of prairie during the last 10 years. The addition of Outdoor Heritage Funds will greatly increase the Service’s ability to protect larger tracts of native prairie throughout the 48 Minnesota Counties in the HPA.

OHF funds will be additive to The Nature Conservancy’s budget.

Although not tabulated as Leveraged Funds, significant in-kind time will be spent by US Fish and Wildlife Service Real Estate, Refuge, and Field staff on this project.

Sustainability and Maintenance

Outdoor Heritage Funds will be used to purchase the land in fee title or to purchase perpetual habitat easements. The land purchased will be transferred to the Service to become units of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR. Long term costs for restoration, management, and wildlife and habitat monitoring will be funded through annual Service operations funding. Habitat easements are perpetual and managers will work with landowners to maintain and, where needed, restore the native prairie on each tract of land.

Outcomes

Healthy lands and waters, habitat, and wildlife populations.

Connected and protected complexes of native prairie.

Greater coordination among agencies involved in native prairie protection.

Greater water quality retention and ability of our watersheds to hold water.

Activity Type Detail
Fee Acquisition Projects

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition?

Yes No, please explain not applicable

If no, please explain here: Local government approval will not be sought on each individual tract of land. Local MN DNR and USDA offices will be contacted regarding potential fee title/easement purchased to determine if any ongoing programs will affect acquisitions. Acquisition goals have also gone through a public review process which occurred during the development of the final Environmental Impact Statement by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as required by the National Environmental Policy Act during refuge establishment.

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection?

Yes No, please explain not applicable

If no, please explain here:

Easement Acquisition Projects

Will the eased land be open for public use?

Yes No, please explain not applicable

If no, please explain here: The properties where habitat easements are purchased will stay in private ownership and therefore will not be open for public use unless the landowner authorizes those uses.

Will the conservation easement be permanent?

Yes No, please explain not applicable

If no, please explain here:

Restoration and Enhancement Projects

Is the activity on permanently protected land and/or public waters?

Yes No, please explain not applicable

If no, please explain here:

Where needed, newly acquired converted lands will be restored to native grasslands or restored wetlands.

Does the activity take place on an Aquatic Management Area (AMA), Scientific and Natural Area (SNA), Wildlife Management Area (WMA), or State Forests?

Yes, which ones No, please explain not applicable

If so, please indicate which ones:

Past Outdoor Heritage Fund Appropriations Received for this program

ML 2009	ML 2010	ML 2011
\$1,583,000 (direct to US Fish and Wildlife Service)	\$2,041,000	\$1,720,000 (pending)

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Milestone	Date
Identify priority acquisitions (fee and easement)	10 potential properties	August 30, 2012
Appraisals ordered	8 tracts	December 1, 2011 - October 1, 2012
Purchase agreements finalized	7 tracts	March 1, 2012 - February 15, 2013
Acquisitions complete	1,200 acres	June 30, 2013
Grassland Restoration/Enhancement completed	3 tracts	June 30, 2015

Note – because not all acquisition efforts are always successful, we will identify more potential properties than available funding. Appraisals will be ordered on the most promising and highest priority tracts (once individual tracts have been approved by LSOHC staff).

Attachments:

- A. Budget
- B. Proposed Output Tables 1-5
- C. Parcel List

Attachment A. Budget Spreadsheet

Name of Proposal:	Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge
Date:	Jul-11

[Link HERE to definitions of the budget items below.](#)

Total Amount of Request \$ 3,500,000 *From page 1 on the funding form.*

Personnel

Position breakdown here	FTE	Over # of years	Anticipated Cash		Cash Leverage Source	Total
			LSOHC Request	Leverage		
<i>Negotiators</i>	42%	1	\$ 42,409		\$	42,409
<i>Data Manager/Technician</i>	17%	1	\$ 8,822		\$	8,822
<i>Field Steward</i>	8%	1	\$ 4,720		\$	4,720
<i>Land Steward</i>	4%	1	\$ 3,287		\$	3,287
<i>Grants Assistant</i>	10%	1	\$ 4,260		\$	4,260
<i>***US FWS Realty, Refuge, and Field Staff - Although not tabulated as Leveraged Funds, significant in-kind time will be spent by US Fish and Wildlife Service Real Estate, Refuge, and Field staff on this project.</i>						\$ -
Total						0.81
			\$ 63,498	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 63,498

Budget and Cash Leverage *(All your LSOHC Request Funds must be direct to and necessary for program outcomes.)*

Please describe how you intend to spend the requested funds.

Budget Item	Anticipated Cash		Cash Leverage Source	Total
	LSOHC Request	Leverage		
Personnel - auto entered from above	\$ 63,498	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 63,498
Contracts	\$ 150,000			\$ 150,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT (breakout in table 7)				\$ -
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT (breakout in table 7)	\$ 3,218,477	\$ 500,000	USFWS NAWCA/LWCF	\$ 3,718,477
Easement Acquisition	<i>***Note \$3,218,477 in fee and/or easment total, fee will be preferred approach, but it will depend in part on landowner goals.</i>			\$ -
Easement Stewardship				\$ -
Travel (in-state)	\$ 2,500			\$ 2,500
Professional Services	\$ 56,000			\$ 56,000
Direct Support Services	\$ 9,525			\$ 9,525
DNR Land Acquisition Costs (\$3,500 per acquisition)				\$ -
Other				\$ -
Capital Equipment <i>(auto entered from below)</i>	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -
Other Equipment/Tools				\$ -
Supplies/Materials				\$ -
				\$ 4,000,000

Capital Equipment *(single items over \$10,000 - auto entered into table above)*

Item Name	LSOHC Request	Leverage
<i>Item 2 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 3 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 4 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 5 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 6 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 7 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 8 enter here</i>		
Total	-	-

Attachment B. Output Tables

Name of Proposal:	Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge
Date:	Jul-11

Table 1 and Table 3 column totals should be the same AND Table 2 and Table 4 column totals should be the same

If your project has lakes or shoreline miles instead of land acres, convert miles to acres for Tables 1 and 3 using the following conversion:

Lakeshore = 6 acres per lakeshore mile / Stream & River Shore = 12 acres per linear mile, if both sides

Table 1. Acres by Resource Type

Describe the scope of the project in acres (use conversion above if needed)

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore					0
Protect Fee		1200			1200
Protect Easement		<i>some of above acres may be easement</i>			0
Protect Other					0
Enhance					0
Total	0	1200	0	0	0

Total Acres (sum of Total column)	1200	<i>These two cells should be the same figure.</i>
Total Acres (sum of Total row)	1200	

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore					\$ -
Protect Fee		\$ 3,500,000			\$ 3,500,000
Protect Easement		<i>some of above \$ may be easement</i>			\$ -
Protect Other					\$ -
Enhance					\$ -
Total	\$ -	\$ 3,500,000	\$ -	\$ -	-

Total Dollars (sum of Total column)	\$ 3,500,000	<i>These two cells should be the same figure.</i>
Total Dollars (sum of Total row)	\$ 3,500,000	

Check to make sure this amount is the same as the Funding Request Amount on page 1 of Main Funding Form.

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore						0
Protect Fee				1200		1200
Protect Easement		<i>some of above acres may be easement</i>				0
Protect Other						0
Enhance						0
Total	0	0	0	1200	0	0

Total Acres (sum of Total column)	1200	<i>These three cells should be the same figure.</i>
Total Acres (sum of Total row)	1200	
Total Acres from Table 1.	1200	

Attachment B. Output Tables

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore						\$ -
Protect Fee				\$ 3,500,000		\$ 3,500,000
Protect Easement			<i>some of above acres may be easement</i>			\$ -
Protect Other						\$ -
Enhance						\$ -
Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,500,000	\$ -	

Total Dollars (sum of Total column) \$ 3,500,000 *These two cells should be the same figure.*
 Total Dollars (sum of Total row) \$ 3,500,000
 Check to make sure these amounts are the same as the Funding Request Amount on page 1 of Main Funding Form.

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles

n/a # miles of Lakes / Streams / Rivers Shoreline

Table 6. Acquisition by PILT Status (enter information in acres)

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats	Total
Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability					0
Acquired in Fee w/o State PILT Liability		1200			1200
Permanent Easement <i>PILT Liability</i> <i>NO State</i>		<i>some of above acres may be easement</i>			0
	0	1200	0	0	

Table 7. Estimated Value of Land Acquisition by PILT Status (enter information in dollars)

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats	Total	
Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability					\$ -	\$ -
Acquired in Fee w/o State PILT Liability		\$ 3,718,477			\$ 3,718,477	\$ 3,718,477
Permanent Easement <i>PILT Liability</i> <i>NO State</i>		<i>some of above \$ may be easement/includes USFWS leveraged \$</i>			\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ 3,718,477	\$ -	\$ -		

FYI: should match total in budget table that is auto entered below

Attachment C. Parcel List

Name of Proposal: Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge
Date: Jul-11

County	Township (25-258)	Range (01-51)	Direction most parcels are 2 with the exception of some areas of Cook County which is 1	Section (01 thru 36)	TRDS	# of acres	Budgetary Estimate (includes administrative, restoration or other related costs and do not include matching money contributed or earned by the transaction)	Description	Activity PF=Protect Fee PE=Protect Easement PO=Protect Other R=Restore E=Enhance	If Easement, what is the easement cost as a % of the fee acquisition?	Any existing protection? (yes/no)	Open to hunting and fishing? (yes/no)
Parcel Name						3,000	\$ 3,500,000		PF/PE			

Note - At time of proposal - this project is not parcel specific as specific tracts for protection have not yet been solidified. Properties will be evaluated and considered for inclusion by TNC and USFWS, and reviewed for approval by LSOHC staff. Funding will be used to purchase either fee title tracts, habitat easements, or a combination of the two.

Information provided will be used to map project locations. Incomplete or inaccurate information will result in that parcel or program not being mapped.