



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Land Acquisition - Phase VII
Laws of Minnesota 2016 Final Report

General Information

Date: 10/10/2022

Project Title: Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Land Acquisition - Phase VII

Funds Recommended: \$2,754,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2016, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(d)

Appropriation Language: \$2,754,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with The Nature Conservancy in cooperation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire land in fee or permanent conservation easements and restore lands within the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area in western Minnesota for addition to the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquisition of lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan and must be consistent with the priorities in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan.

Manager Information

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Location Information

County Location(s): Kandiyohi, Pope, Pipestone, Rock and Clay.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Prairie

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

The acquisition work for this phase has been completed. The goal for this phase was the protection of 730 acres, 390 in fee title and 340 in conservation easements. Over the life of the grant we protected 910 acres (124% of the goal), 482 acres in fee title and 428 acres in conservation easements. The goal for native prairie acres for this phase was 410 acres. We protected a total of 456 native prairie acres (111% of the goal): 220 native prairie acres in fee title and 256 native prairie acres in easements.

Process & Methods

The Council's 25-Year Framework identifies protecting Minnesota's remaining native prairies as a critical priority. The Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan (Prairie Plan) describes the importance of preserving the cores/corridors/complexes in areas with the greatest opportunities for long-term conservation of these prairies. The Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge (NTP NWR) Land Acquisition program shares these goals. This program is a cooperative, multi-year effort of The Nature Conservancy and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to preserve and protect our remaining prairies and the surrounding habitat that buffers them. With Outdoor Heritage Fund support, this partnership is working together to advance these goals.

This program also includes a relatively small restoration/enhancement component of the acres acquired. While the prioritization criteria favor parcels that are in good condition, because of the nature of parcel ownership some properties included small areas of converted or degraded lands needing grassland or wetland restoration/enhancement. This work is completed only on parcels acquired with this funding, as needed to get these properties into a sustainable condition for inclusion into the NTP NWR and future management. These acres are not reported as a separate outcome in the Output Tables in order to avoid any possible double-counting.

Restoration/enhancement activity with this round of funding included grassland site preparation/seedling or interseeding/mowing, tree and/or dense vegetation removal and invasive species control on two parcels.

How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?

This program's top criterion for selecting projects is the presence of remnant native prairie. As noted above, 486 acres of remnant native prairie were permanently protected. Another important goal is protecting lands in existing complexes of habitat and protected lands were in areas identified as a Prairie Core or Corridor in the MN Prairie Plan. We also target lands with high-quality habitat and the rare species this habitat supports. Data from the Minnesota Biological Survey identified nearly 2/3 of the protected acres as having significant biodiversity. These lands support a wide range of prairie species of concern and the vegetative communities that support them, including wet, mesic, and dry hill prairies, wet seepage prairies, calcareous fens, and migratory stopover habitats for water birds. Species benefited by the protected parcels include Blanding's turtles, the creek heelsplitter mussel, nesting upland sandpipers, small white lady's slipper, and many others. Another highlight in this phase was the protection of multiple lengths of stream that are designated critical habitat for the federally endangered Topeka shiner.

How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

This program's overall priorities are guided by the listed conservation plans. Individual properties are reviewed by USFWS and TNC biologists using the parcel selection criteria listed above. The analyses include: existence of native prairie, location in a prairie core or corridor, presence of nearby protected lands, and the presence of other rare habitats and species.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

This program is a cooperative effort of The Nature Conservancy and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. TNC and USFWS staff cooperate on parcel selection, working with landowners, completing due diligence requirements, and wrapping up any needed restoration/enhancement. Other agencies and NGOs are involved in this process through Landscape Technical Teams. These groups were set up to coordinate action in the priority areas identified in the Prairie Plan.

Based on feedback from local governments, TNC and USFWS instituted a new process in June, 2016 to send written notification to county governments prior to acquisition, and all of the properties in this round were acquired after this was implemented. No concerns on these projects were reported by the counties.

Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

There were no exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects encountered for this program.

What other fund may contribute to this program?

- N/A

What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All parcels purchased under this funding are or will be transferred to the USFWS for inclusion in the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. The USFWS will manage these properties, and will fund the long-term restoration, management, and wildlife/habitat/easement monitoring activities through annual USFWS operations funding.

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$255,000	\$235,000	\$194,500	\$125,000	\$205,700	USFWS	\$380,000	\$400,200
Contracts	\$95,000	\$145,000	\$149,100	-	-	-	\$95,000	\$149,100
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,210,000	\$1,375,200	\$1,425,200	\$200,000	\$258,300	PF-USFWS	\$1,410,000	\$1,683,500
Easement Acquisition	\$968,500	\$803,300	\$803,300	-	-	-	\$968,500	\$803,300
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$6,000	\$10,000	\$6,700	-	-	-	\$6,000	\$6,700
Professional Services	\$130,000	\$100,000	\$67,700	-	-	-	\$130,000	\$67,700
Direct Support Services	\$56,500	\$56,500	\$52,300	\$56,500	\$52,600	TNC	\$113,000	\$104,900
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$8,000	\$4,000	\$1,500	-	-	-	\$8,000	\$1,500
Supplies/Materials	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$12,600	-	-	-	\$25,000	\$12,600
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,754,000	\$2,754,000	\$2,712,900	\$381,500	\$516,600	-	\$3,135,500	\$3,229,500

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Protection Staff	0.8	3.0	\$131,400	-	-	\$131,400
Project Manager	0.16	3.0	\$50,400	-	-	\$50,400
Grants Administration	0.1	3.0	\$12,600	-	-	\$12,600
Science/Stewardship Staff	0.01	3.0	\$100	-	-	\$100
USFWS In-Kind/Volunteer	0.0	0.0	-	\$205,700	USFWS	\$205,700

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

DSS is based on The Nature Conservancy's Federally Negotiated rate as approved by the US Dept. of Interior.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

We permanently protected 819 acres, 112% of the stated goal of the program, and 456 acres of remnant native prairie, 111% of the native prairie acres goal, while remaining below budget by approximately 2%. Because it was such a small amount (\$42,000) we were unable to secure another small acquisition by the grant end date and are returning it to LSOHC for reallocation. We provided 135% of the originally anticipated leverage made up in parts by USFWS in-kind staff contributions, a North American Wetland Conservation Act Grant funded acquisition in Lac qui Parle county and TNC foregone DSS.

Total Revenue: \$0

Revenue Spent: \$0

Revenue Balance: \$0

Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	410	482	0	0	0	0	410	482
Protect in Easement	0	0	410	428	0	0	0	0	410	428
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	820	910	0	0	0	0	820	910

How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie? (Table 1b)

Type	Native Prairie (AP)	Native Prairie (Final)
Restore	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	140	220
Protect in Easement	270	236
Enhance	0	0
Total	410	456

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	\$1,530,000	\$1,681,300	-	-	-	-	\$1,530,000	\$1,681,300
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$1,224,000	\$1,031,600	-	-	-	-	\$1,224,000	\$1,031,600
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$2,754,000	\$2,712,900	-	-	-	-	\$2,754,000	\$2,712,900

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in	0	0	0	0	0	0	410	482	0	0	410	482

Fee w/o State PILT Liability												
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	410	428	0	0	410	428
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	820	910	0	0	820	910

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,530,000	\$1,681,300	-	-	\$1,530,000	\$1,681,300
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,224,000	\$1,031,600	-	-	\$1,224,000	\$1,031,600
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,754,000	\$2,712,900	-	-	\$2,754,000	\$2,712,900

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Outcomes

Programs in prairie region:

- Remnant native prairies are part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and large and small wetlands ~ *USFWS and TNC biologists and GIS analysts measured the following outcomes from this funding:*
Total acres protected - 819 acres
Acres of native prairie - 456 acres
Other native habitat protected - 62 acres of wetlands and 9,500' of stream frontage in critical topeka shiner habitat
Projects located in MN Prairie Conservation Plan core/corridor/complex - 100%

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

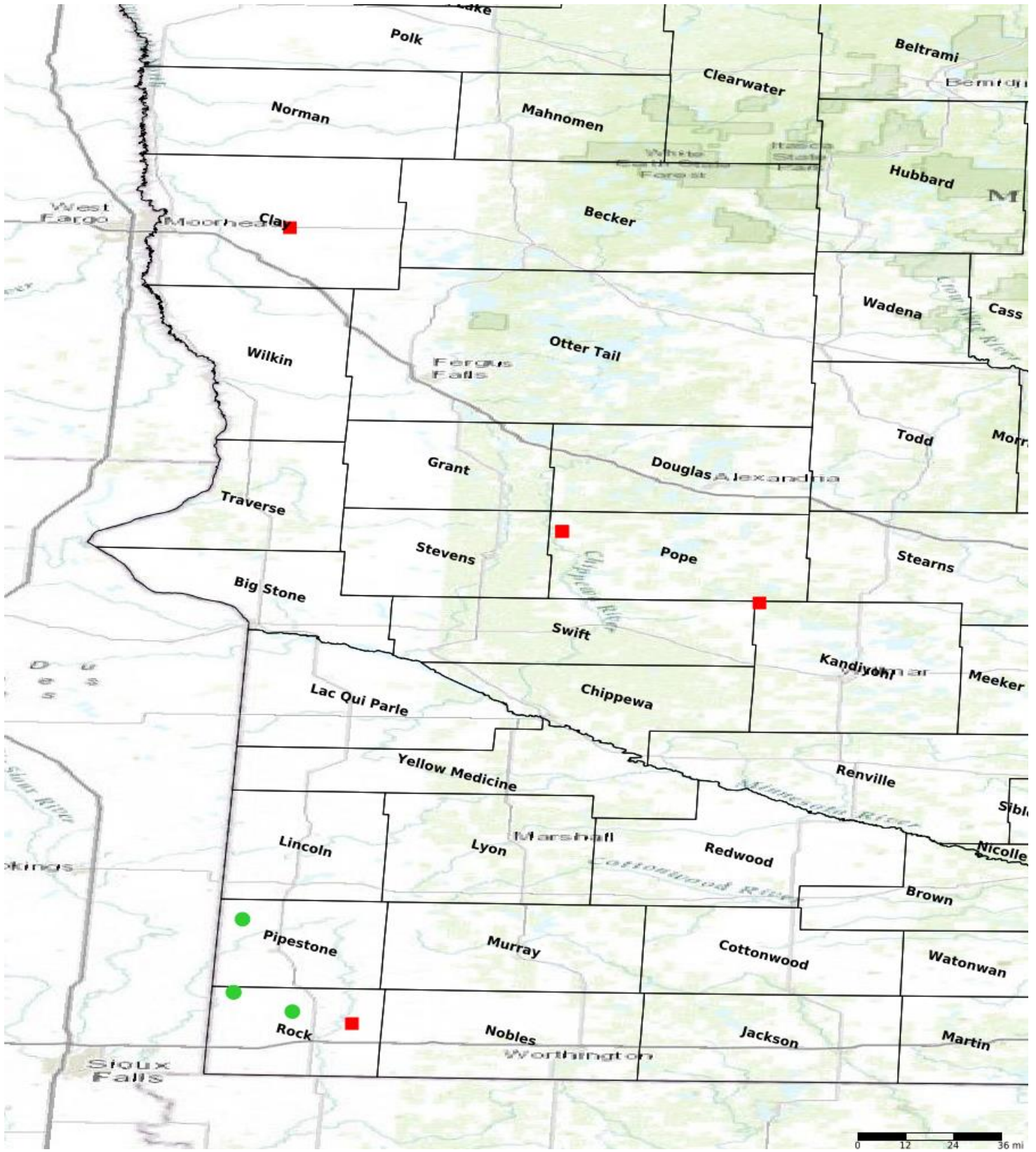
Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Clay #8	Clay	13946211	72	\$115,000	No
Pipestone #5	Pipestone	10846232	28	\$48,000	No
Pope #13	Pope	12640232	160	\$480,500	No
Pope #14	Pope	12640232	85	\$83,700	No
Rock #12	Rock	10344221	165	\$735,500	No
Rock #10	Rock	10345205	112	\$180,400	No
Rock #8	Rock	10446207	42	\$107,100	No
Rock #7	Rock	10446207	90	\$255,200	No

Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Kandiyohi #5	Kandiyohi	12236206	156	\$534,100	No	4	\$0

Parcel Map



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✦ Enhance
- ⊕ Other