

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2017 / ML 2016 Request for Funding



Date: June 01, 2015

Program or Project Title: Accelerated Native Prairie Bank Protection - Phase II

Funds Requested: \$9,090,000

Manager's Name: Judy Schulte

Title: EWR Prairie Biologist

Organization: MN DNR

Address: 1241 E Bridge Street

City: Redwood Falls, MN 56283

Office Number: 507-822-0344

Mobile Number: 507-822-0344

Email: judy.schulte@state.mn.us

Website: dnr.state.mn.us

County Locations: Not Listed

Regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Prairie

Abstract:

The Native Prairie Bank Program will work with willing landowners to enroll 1500 acres of native prairie in perpetual conservation easements. Enrollment will focus on Minnesota Prairie Plan identified landscapes and target high quality prairies that provide valuable wildlife habitat.

Design and scope of work:

The loss of native prairie and associated grassland habitat is arguably the greatest conservation challenge facing western and southern Minnesota. This proposal aims to permanently protect 1500 acres of native prairie habitat by accelerating the enrollment of Native Prairie Bank easements.

This acceleration is necessary to address today's rapid loss of native prairie and associated grasslands and meet the habitat protection goals set forth in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. Minnesota was once a land of 18 million acres of prairie, today about 1.3 percent remains. The few acres of native prairie that remain in Minnesota may be areas that once were thought of as too rocky or wet for row crops but with advancements in technology and equipment, in addition to growing competition for tillable acres, this is no longer the case. Grassland-to-cropland conversion is not the only impact to native prairie. Significant degradation and loss of native prairie is also occurring due to lack of prairie orientated management, property development and mineral extraction. If the current trajectory of grassland and prairie loss continues it will be devastating to grassland dependent wildlife populations.

Recognizing that protecting grassland and wetland habitat is the one of the most critical conservation challenges facing Minnesota, over a dozen leading conservation organizations have developed a road map for moving forward – the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. This plan calls for several outcomes, one being the protection of all remaining native prairie, largely through conservation easements. One of the primary easement tools for native prairie protection in Minnesota is the DNR administered Native Prairie Bank Program easement program. The Native Prairie Bank Program was established by the 1987 legislature to protect private native prairie

lands by authorizing the state to acquire conservation easements from willing landowners. To date 117 Native Prairie Bank easements have been enrolled into the program, covering over 9,000 acres. The Native Prairie Bank Program targets the protection of native prairie tracts, but can also include adjoining lands as buffers and additional habitat.

Eligible tracts are prioritized based on several factors including:

- 1) Size and quality of habitat, focusing on diverse native prairie communities that have been identified by the Minnesota Biological Survey
- 2) The occurrence of rare species, or suitability habitat for rare species
- 3) Lands that are part of a larger habitat complex

Native Prairie Bank easements provide enduring, long-term protection to prairie habitat by placing restrictions on future land use, including, but not limited to:

- 1) No topographic changes or alterations to the natural landscape (plow, drain, fill, etc.)
- 2) No dumping trash or garbage
- 3) Motor vehicle use limited to management purposes (weed control, prescribed burning, etc.)
- 4) No drawing of water for irrigation or other uses
- 5) No building or placing of structures on the protected property
- 6) No subdivision or dividing of the parcel
- 7) No introduction of invasive species
- 8) No pesticide use without DNR approval

In addition, a Native Prairie Bank easement grants the DNR the right to enter the property to manage the prairie as needed, as well as monitor and enforce the easements terms/conditions.

To accelerate efforts, the Native Prairie Bank Program is coordinating with Minnesota Prairie Plan partners and using the network of established Local Technical Teams (LTT's) to reach out to landowners and increase program enrollment. The LTT's are local staff from SWCD's, NRCS, DNR, USFWS, The Nature Conservancy and Pheasants Forever - to name a few. The LTT's have already begun cultivating relationships with prairie landowners and eagerly await funding to deliver this program to willing landowners - there is a waiting list. The new enrollment of 1500 acres will focus on priority landscapes identified in the Minnesota Prairie Plan, which directly coincides with the location of LTT's. Through work with the MN Prairie Conservation Plan, the Native Prairie Bank Program actively seeks additional funding sources to further leverage state funds (e.g. partner on USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program proposal).

Crops:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **No**

How does the request address MN habitats that have: historical value to fish and wildlife, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, MN County Biological Survey data, and/or rare, threatened and endangered species inventories:

Native Prairie Bank gives priority to sites identified by the Minnesota Biological Survey and targets rare and endangered plant and animal species, high quality plant communities, and key habitats for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). SWAP identifies 139 SGCNs alone in the Prairie Parkland Province. SWAP also identifies prairie as a key habitat in 11 different subsections within the State. Prairie, as a habitat type, contains more SGCNs than any other habitat in Minnesota. The Native Prairie Bank Program can protect these unique wildlife habitats and work with the landowners of these tracts to manage and enhance them, all in a way that is permanent and enduring.

What is the nature of urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible:

Minnesota was once a land of 18 million acres of prairie, today only 1.3 percent remains. Development pressures continue and native prairies are converted to other uses every day. While roughly half of the few native prairies that remain have some level of formal protection, many do not.

Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) systematically collects, interprets and delivers data on plant and animal distribution and the ecology of native plant communities. These data is used directly in the scoring and evaluation of potential Native Prairie Bank parcels. MBS also conducts long-term monitoring to assess outcomes of conservation actions.

Which sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are applicable to this project:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Prairie:

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna

Forest / Prairie Transition:

- Protect, enhance, and restore rare native remnant prairie

Relationship to other funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund

The Native Prairie Bank Program has a good track record of securing Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund (ENRTF) dollars for the stewardship of Native Prairie Bank easements. This includes funding for landowner stewardship plans, technical assistance, prescribed burning and invasive species control, as well as additional acquisition of easements. The program will continue to seek ENRTF funds for native prairie stewardship activities.

How does this proposal accelerate or supplement your current efforts in this area:

Since inception of Native Prairie Bank, the program has been able to enroll an average of 4 properties protecting 354 acres each year. This is a reflection of funding available, not landowner interest in the program. At that pace most native prairies will be lost before the landowners can be offered protection options. A majority of existing Native Prairie Bank projects were acquired with state bonding funds, while others have been acquired with Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Funds. In addition to this proposal, the Native Prairie Bank Program is also working toward accelerating funding available from state bonding and the Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund.

Describe the source and amount of non-OHF money spent for this work in the past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
ML 15	Outdoor Heritage Fund	\$3,740,000
ML 08	Bonding-State	\$1,600,000
ML 08	ENRTF (LCCMR)	\$475,000
ML 06	Bonding-State	\$900,000
ML 05	Bonding-State	\$950,000
ML 03	ENRTF (LCCMR)	\$191,600
ML 15	ENRTF (LCCMR)	\$2,750,000
ML 14	Outdoor Heritage Fund	\$3,000,000
ML 13	Outdoor Heritage Fund	\$800,000
ML 13	ENRTF (LCCMR)	\$472,000
ML 11	ENRTF (LCCMR)	\$521,000
ML 11	Outdoor Heritage Fund	\$347,900
ML 10	Outdoor Heritage Fund	\$590,700
ML 10	ENRTF (LCCMR)	\$94,500

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended:

The policy of the DNR is to follow, as closely as possible, established industry practices in the stewardship of its conservation easement interests. The intent of this stewardship is to protect both the conservation values of the property protected by these easements and the investment of the state in those interests. Elements of this stewardship include the creation of baseline property reports,

enforcement protocols, regular compliance monitoring, effective record keeping and reporting, and maintaining effective working relationships with the owners of these easement properties. The Native Prairie Bank Program implements this policy by following DNR Operational Order 128 "Conservation Easement Stewardship" along with the "Ecological and Water Resources Division Conservation Easement Stewardship Plan and Guidelines". This plan calls for annual landowner contacts as well as on-the-ground site evaluations once every three years if no violations are found. If a violation is found, annual site visits (or more frequently) are conducted until the violation is rectified. Budgeted into this proposal is funding to enroll into an account dedicated to the perpetual monitoring and enforcement of Native Prairie Bank easements acquired under this proposal.

Explain the things you will do in the future to maintain project outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2020 or as easements are completed.	OHF	Develop Baseline Property Report to be signed by both the landowner and DNR at time of closing.	Once easement closes, transfer funds to dedicated Conservation Easement Stewardship Account per OHF appropriation and accomplishment plan for long-term easement stewardship.	
Perpetually/Annually	Interest derived from dedicated Conservation Easement Stewardship Account established with this appropriation	Ongoing landowner partnership, monitoring, reporting and easement stewardship as laid out in DNR Operational Order 128 and the Division of Ecological and Water Resources Conservation Easement Stewardship Division Guidelines		

Activity Details:

If funded, this proposal will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056 - **Yes**

Will the eased land be open for public use - **No**

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection - **Yes**

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program - **Yes**

Is the activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 - **Yes (Private Land)**

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Enroll 1500 acres of Native Prairie Bank easements	June 30, 2020

Federal Funding:

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **No**

Outcomes:

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Remnant native prairies are part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and large and small wetlands - *Acres of native prairie protected from conversion*
 - *Acres of native prairie protected with high connectivity to other conservation lands*
 - *Acres protected within Prairie Plan Core and Corridor Areas*
 - *Average size of protected complex*

Programs in prairie region:

- Remnant native prairies are part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and large and small wetlands - *Acres of native prairie protected from conversion*
 - *Acres of native prairie protected with high connectivity to other conservation lands*

- Acres protected within Prairie Plan Core and Corridor Areas
- Average size of protected complex

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$9,090,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$507,000	\$0		\$507,000
Contracts	\$68,000	\$0		\$68,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$7,600,000	\$0		\$7,600,000
Easement Stewardship	\$400,000	\$0		\$400,000
Travel	\$50,000	\$0		\$50,000
Professional Services	\$350,000	\$0		\$350,000
Direct Support Services	\$87,000	\$0		\$87,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$6,000	\$0		\$6,000
Supplies/Materials	\$22,000	\$0		\$22,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$9,090,000	\$0	-	\$9,090,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Project Coordinator/Acquisition Specialist	0.31	4.00	\$112,000	\$0		\$112,000
Natural Resource Specialist/Technician	1.34	4.00	\$375,000	\$0		\$375,000
Laborer	0.14	4.00	\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000
Total	1.79	12.00	\$507,000	\$0	-	\$507,000

Amount of Request: \$9,090,000

Amount of Leverage: \$0

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.00%

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	50	0	0	50
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	1,500	0	0	1,500
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	1,550	0	0	1,550

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

Type	Native Prairie
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	1,200
Enhance	0
Total	1,200

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$9,040,000	\$0	\$0	\$9,040,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$9,090,000	\$0	\$0	\$9,090,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SEForest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	15	0	35	0	50
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	500	0	1,000	0	1,500
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	515	0	1,035	0	1,550

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SEForest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$15,000	\$0	\$35,000	\$0	\$50,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$3,013,300	\$0	\$6,026,700	\$0	\$9,040,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$3,028,300	\$0	\$6,061,700	\$0	\$9,090,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$1,000	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$6,027	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	\$0	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$6,027	\$0	\$6,027	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

Parcel List

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type protect.

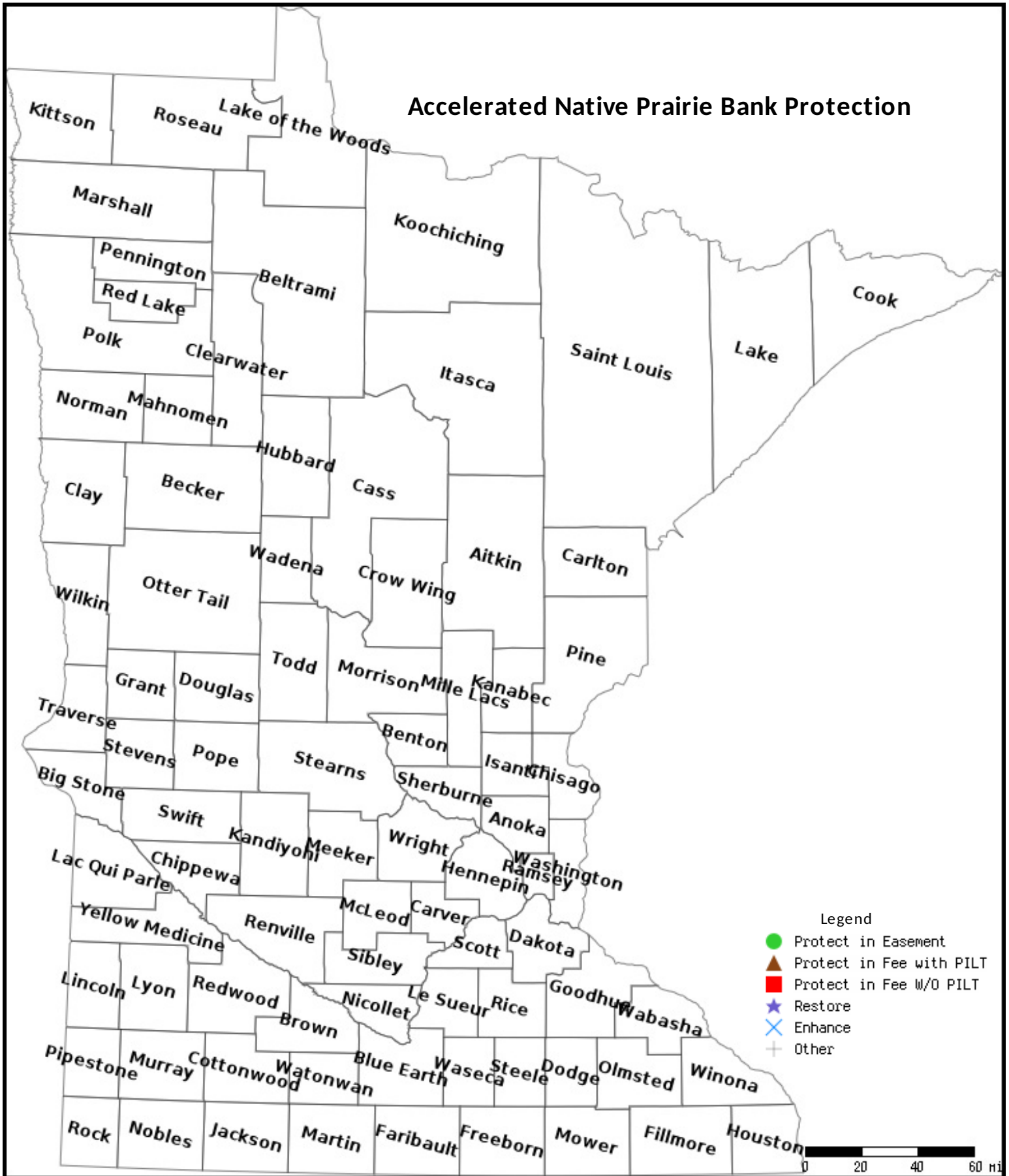
Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

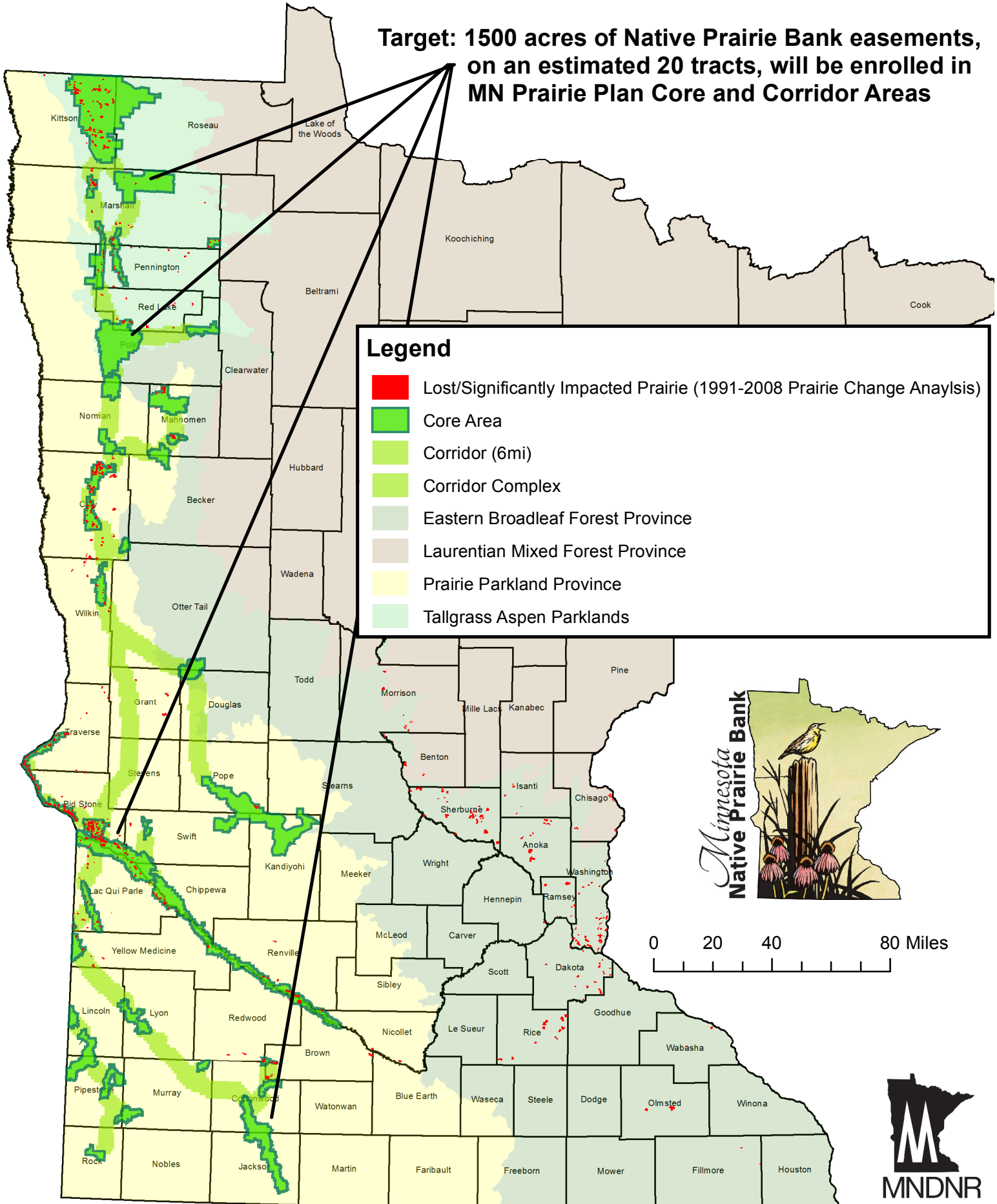
Parcel Map



Data Generated From Parcel List

2016 Outdoor Heritage Fund Accelerated Native Prairie Bank Protection

Target: 1500 acres of Native Prairie Bank easements, on an estimated 20 tracts, will be enrolled in MN Prairie Plan Core and Corridor Areas





Native Prairie Bank Evaluation Form

Date _____

Site Name _____ County _____
 Township _____ Range _____ Section(s) _____
 Acres _____ Landowner Name(s) _____ SNA Evaluator _____

EVALUATION FACTORS	NOTES	POINTS
<i>Diversity and quality of native prairie habitat</i>		
<i>Size of prairie</i>		
<i>Occurrence of, or suitable habitat for, rare species</i>		
<i>Location relative to other native prairie and/or public lands</i>		
<i>Potential for long-term management and enhancement</i>		
<i>Additional factors (include as appropriate)</i>		
OVERALL SITE EVALUATION		TOTAL 0

Native Prairie Bank Evaluation Guidelines

EVALUATION FACTORS	NOTES	POINTS
<p><i>Diversity and quality of native prairie habitat</i></p>	<p><i>30 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of a native plant community with A, B, or B/C element occurrence (EO) ranking based on DNR Natural Heritage Database and Minnesota Biological Survey protocols; <i>and/or</i> • At least 75% of the project site's native prairie communities are C rank or higher based on DNR Natural Heritage Database, Minnesota Biological Survey protocols; <i>and/or</i> • Site identified as Minnesota Biological Survey site of Outstanding Biodiversity Significance; <i>and/or</i> • Presence of regionally significant prairie community type (e.g. wet prairie communities in predominately drained regions of the state); <i>and/or</i> • Locally documented high biodiversity despite a previous low Minnesota Biological Survey ranking - must be confirmed by DNR staff using Minnesota Biological Survey protocols. <p><i>25 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 50% of the project site's native prairie communities are C rank or higher based on DNR Natural Heritage Database, Minnesota Biological Survey protocols; <i>and/or</i> • Site identified as Minnesota Biological Survey site of High Biodiversity Significance. <p><i>15 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 25% of the project site's native prairie communities are C rank or higher based on DNR Natural Heritage Database, Minnesota Biological Survey protocols; <i>and/or</i> • Site identified as Minnesota Biological Survey site of Moderate Biodiversity Significance. <p><i>5 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only native prairie present on site has a D ranking based on DNR Natural Heritage Database, Minnesota Biological Survey protocols. 	<p><i>5-30</i></p>

Native Prairie Bank Evaluation Guidelines

EVALUATION FACTORS	NOTES	POINTS
<i>Size of prairie</i>	<p><i>15 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prairie is regionally significant in size. Example: a 20-acre bluffland prairie in Southeastern or along the Minnesota River is regionally significant, but a 20-acre site in the Agassiz Beach Ridge is not regionally significant. <p><i>10 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate sized prairie remnant relative to other prairies in the area. <p><i>0-3 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small prairie remnant relative to other prairies in the area. 	<i>0-15</i>
<i>Occurrence of, or suitable habitat for, rare species</i>	<p><i>20 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of, or habitat for, a federally listed rare species; and/or • Presence of one or more state endangered or threatened species with an A, B or B/C element occurrence (EO) rank. <p><i>15 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable habitat for rare species; species found within ½ mile. • Five or more Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) as determined by Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare: Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. • An unranked occurrence of a state endangered or threatened species. <p><i>10 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of one or more special concern species with a C/D or D element occurrence (EO) rank. <p><i>0 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No rare species on site or within 2 miles. 	<i>0-20</i>

Native Prairie Bank Evaluation Guidelines

EVALUATION FACTORS	NOTES	POINTS
<p><i>Location relative to other native prairie and/or public lands</i></p>	<p><i>15 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a Core Area of the Prairie Plan or within a relatively high concentration of native prairie remnants and rare species occurrences; <i>and/or</i> Near or adjacent to other permanently protected conservation lands; particularly units with prairie/grassland habitat. <p><i>10 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a Prairie Plan Corridor. <p><i>0-5 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated parcel. Other prairie habitat or conservation lands within 2 miles = 5 points; greater than 10 miles = 0 points. 	<p><i>0-15</i></p>
<p><i>Potential for long-term management and enhancement</i></p>	<p><i>10 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves management options for larger, contiguous area (e.g. prescribed fire, invasive species control). Direct access from a public road (property borders road). <p><i>8 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No major limitations to management Access route from a public road to the property that landowner is willing to designate as legal access. <p><i>0-3 Points</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant limitations to management (e.g. surrounding residential development, invasive species control issues). Poor or non-existent access. May include needing permission from neighboring parcel to access, or crossing other privately-owned parcel(s) to access. 	<p><i>0-10</i></p>

Native Prairie Bank Evaluation Guidelines

EVALUATION FACTORS	NOTES	POINTS
<p><i>Additional factors (include as appropriate)</i></p>	<p>10 Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeopardy of losing prairie because site is in an area experiencing development pressure due to gravel mining, cropland conversion, housing, or other imminent threats. • Landowner is willing to donate significant acreage and donation would contribute to prairie conservation goals. <p>5 Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation and a recommendation for protection by local staff familiar with the site. May be staff from DNR, USFWS, NRCS, SWCD, or researchers. 	<p>5-10</p>
<p>OVERALL SITE EVALUATION</p>	<p>Overall summary for enrollment based on evaluation criteria. Write a succinct statement describing your evaluation of the site. This is very helpful for developing the fact sheet and for future reports.</p>	<p>Total Points</p>

