

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2019 / ML 2018 Request for Funding



Date: May 30, 2017

Program or Project Title: Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge, Phase IX

Funds Requested: \$6,175,000

Manager's Name: Richard Johnson

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County Locations: Big Stone, Brown, Chippewa, Clay, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Norman, Pipestone, Pope, Renville, Rock, Wilkin, and Yellow Medicine.

Regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Prairie

Abstract:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will cooperate to permanently protect native prairie and associated complexes of wetlands and native habitats in western and central Minnesota by purchasing approximately 1,840 acres of fee title properties and/or permanent habitat easements. Approximately 920 acres will be native prairie. Work will be focused in areas identified as having significant biodiversity by the Minnesota Biological Survey and located in priority areas in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan (Prairie Plan).

Design and scope of work:

The Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) was established in 2000 to address the loss of America's grasslands and the decline of grassland wildlife. The Refuge was created to permanently preserve and restore a portion of our disappearing tallgrass prairie. The Refuge encompasses all or part of 85 counties in western Minnesota and northwestern Iowa.

A 2015 University of Wisconsin study confirms that conversion is still a very real risk. A drop in crop prices may have slowed this, but the threat isn't gone. It's vital that we protect our remaining native prairies before they are lost.

Progress towards the Refuge's goal has been limited by available acquisition funding. Since 2000, the Refuge has protected 5,101 acres in Minnesota with funding from non-OHF sources. The acquisition budget from these sources falls far short of the landowner interest in working with the Refuge.

Funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) will allow The Nature Conservancy and US Fish and Wildlife Service, working in partnership, to significantly accelerate this progress. TNC and USFWS will cooperate on protecting approximately 1,840 acres of native prairie and associated habitat in the 49 Minnesota counties within the Refuge boundary. Of these, we expect to protect approximately 645 acres in fee title and approximately 1,195 acres with permanent habitat easements.

This program's work is targeted at protecting high-quality native habitat in areas with existing concentrations of native prairie, wetlands,

and protected lands. The lands protected will consist of native prairie and associated habitats including wetlands, streams, and lakes.

Potential acquisitions are reviewed using the following criteria:

- 1) Is there native prairie on the tract? If not, is it adjacent to native prairie?
- 2) Is the property in a priority area identified in the Prairie Plan?
- 3) Is it adjacent to an existing complex of protected land?
- 4) Was it identified by Minnesota Biological Survey as having concentrations of threatened and endangered species and communities?
- 5) Is it suitable for public recreation?

Because of the nature of parcel ownership, some properties acquired through this program will likely include small areas of converted or degraded habitat needing restoration/enhancement. Restoration/enhancement will be completed where needed.

Previous OHF support has allowed the partners to make significant progress towards our shared goal of protecting and buffering the remaining native prairie. The first property was acquired in March, 2013. 4,320 acres have now been added to the Refuge. Of these, 2,820 acres are classified as native prairie. Additional habitat includes 460 acres of wetlands and 11 miles of stream and/or lakefront. Landowners have committed a further 530 acres. Negotiations are ongoing with a long list of interested landowners.

With additional support from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, this program will continue to make real and lasting progress towards protecting Minnesota's native prairies and the wildlife that depend on those lands.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Northern Tallgrass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area (HPA) Final Environmental Impact Statement

Describe how your program will advance the indicators identified in the plans selected:

This program's work is guided by the Prairie Plan and Northern Tallgrass Prairie's Habitat Preservation Area plan. Key goals include: 1) Protecting Minnesota's remaining native prairie, and 2) Connecting and buffering prairies in larger complexes of native prairie, grasslands, wetlands, and existing protected lands.

OHF support has helped the partners make substantial progress towards both goals. To date, 65% of the acres protected have been native prairie and more than 90% have been in Prairie Plan priority areas. The Prairie Plan identifies areas (cores/corridors/complexes) with the greatest opportunities for long-term conservation of these habitats. Exceptional projects in other areas may be considered. However, the focus is on these priority areas.

This proposal builds on this success. Approximately 920 acres of native prairie will be protected and critical areas identified in the Prairie Plan will be strengthened and connected.

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

Describe how your program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife as indicated in the LSOHC priorities:

The Council's 25-Year Framework identifies protecting Minnesota's remnant native prairies as a critical priority. By carefully targeting our work, the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge (NTP NWR) program can make significant and permanent progress towards that goal.

Biological Survey data on species and habitat quality identifies and prioritizes project locations. The Prairie Plan identifies sites that

build on existing concentrations of habitat and protected lands. TNC and USFWS biologists do additional survey work on each site. Using this information, the program focuses on acquiring high-quality habitat in places with the best opportunities for long-term success.

This program's previous work demonstrates this. 4,320 acres have been protected, including 2,820 acres identified as native prairie. The Biological Survey classifies 2,690 acres as biologically significant, with 1,090 having High or Outstanding quality. 3,920 acres are in Prairie Plan priority areas. These high-quality, diverse lands provide habitat for a wide range of game and other wildlife.

This program also strives to maximize conservation results with the funding available. To date, habitat has been protected at an average cost of \$2,200/acre. The current phase has a projected cost of \$3,355/acre, due to several projects in higher-cost areas of the state. This still offers a very cost-effective opportunity to preserve high-quality habitat.

By tightly focusing on protecting the best available habitat, building on existing conservation work, and doing this as affordably as possible, the NTP NWR program is building a real and lasting legacy.

Describe how the proposal uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

This program's goals are guided by the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan and the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area plan. Individual properties are reviewed/approved by TNC and USFWS biologists using the parcel selection criteria described above, including: native prairie, location in prairie complexes, nearby protected lands, and Minnesota Biological Survey research.

Biological Survey data is a critical part of this review. Every proposed project is evaluated using Survey information on: 1) Native prairie sites, 2) Rare, threatened and endangered species locations, and 3) Areas of biodiversity significance.

The selection criteria also recognize the importance of building on existing complexes/corridors and reducing fragmentation. If a prairie is small or isolated, the animal and plant species that live there are at risk. The best approach is conserving larger areas, like the Prairie Plan's cores/complexes/corridors, that have the scale, species diversity, and connectivity to support functioning prairie systems over the long-term.

The numbers shared above demonstrate this program's success at identifying and protecting biologically significant lands located in areas with existing complexes of habitat and protected lands.

How does the proposal address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species:

The NTP NWR program takes the approach that specific species are best protected by conserving high-quality habitat in the most critical prairie areas.

This focus on habitat quality has produced results. Of the 4,320 acres protected, most have been in areas surveyed by the Biological Survey and identified as having significant biodiversity. These high-quality lands provide habitat for a wide range of species, from game species to those that are endangered, threatened, or in greatest conservation need.

Biological Survey field work has identified populations of 26 rare species located wholly or partially on NTP NWR properties protected with OHF-funding. Benefited species include:

Birds – Baird's sparrow (endangered), Wilson's phalarope (threatened), greater prairie-chicken, marbled godwit, and yellow rail

Butterflies – Dakota skipper (endangered), arogos skipper, Pawnee skipper, and regal fritillary. NTP NWR acquisitions with this funding have protected almost 5% of the historical occurrences of poweshiek skipperlings (endangered) in Minnesota.

Fish - Topeka shiner (endangered). This program has protected 13,400' of frontage on streams and rivers identified as critical habitat for this species.

Reptiles - Blanding's turtle (threatened)

Plants – sterile sedge (threatened), hair-like beak rush (threatened), blanket flower, buffalo grass, few-flowered spikerush, Hall's sedge, least moonwort, Missouri milk-vetch, mudwort, prairie mimosa, slender milk-vetch, small white lady's slipper, western white prairie clover

Future acquisition work will be guided by this same focus on high-quality, diverse habitat, benefiting a wide range of species.

Identify indicator species and associated quantities this habitat will typically support:

To ensure consistency we are using the five indicator species and metrics identified by MNDNR to represent the prairie/grassland habitats: pheasant, prairie chicken, bobolink, grasshopper sparrow, and monarch butterfly.

Pheasant

By looking at the ratios of CRP acres in Minnesota to pheasant harvest, we can estimate that every three acres of grassland habitat has the potential to produce one harvested pheasant rooster.

Prairie Chickens

According to the literature and personal observations in Minnesota, prairie chickens require a minimum of 320 acres of high quality grasslands with no areas hostile to grassland wildlife (woodlots, farmsteads, etc) near these grasslands. For every 320 acre patch of high quality grassland in the prairie chicken range in the northwest part of the state, we can expect there to be a lek, or booming ground. The average size of booming grounds in Minnesota is roughly 11 males.

Bobolink and Grasshopper Sparrow

The breeding territory size of bobolinks and grasshopper sparrows is 1.7 and 2.1 acres respectively in high quality habitat in Wisconsin. If all of the habitat was occupied, 100 acres of habitat could potentially hold approximately 60 and 48 pairs of bobolinks and grasshopper sparrows, respectively.

Monarch Butterfly

Research from the University of Minnesota has shown that it takes approximately 30 milkweed plants to result in one monarch butterfly contributing to the overwintering Mexican population. Grasslands can have between 100-250 milkweed stems per acre. An acre of restored or enhanced grassland could potentially contribute 3 to 8 monarchs to the population.

Outcomes:

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Remnant native prairies are part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and large and small wetlands *This program's work is primarily focused on the Prairie region. A small portion of the Refuge, however, falls in the Forest-Prairie Transition region. If work is done in this region, the following outcomes will be measured and reported: 1) Total acres protected, 2) Acres of native prairie, 3) Acres of wetland, 4) Feet of stream- and lake-front, 5) Acres within Prairie Plan priorities, 6) # of endangered/threatened/species in greatest conservation need (SGCN) on protected properties.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Remnant native prairies are part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and large and small wetlands *The program's top priority is protecting native prairie. The majority of lands acquired will be native prairie and associated habitats including wetlands, streams and lakes. The parcel selection criteria also favor building onto existing complexes of prairie/grassland/wetland and protected land. The following outcomes will be measured and reported for acquisition in this region: 1) Total acres protected, 2) Acres of native prairie, 3) Acres of wetland, 4) Feet of stream- and lake-front, 5) Acres within Prairie Plan priorities, 6) # of endangered/threatened/SGCN on protected properties.*

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

Outdoor Heritage Funds will be used to purchase the land in fee title or to purchase perpetual habitat easements. The land and easements purchased will be transferred to the USFWS to become units of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. Long term costs for restoration, management, and wildlife/habitat/easement monitoring will be funded through annual USFWS operations funding.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Annually	USFWS - Annual Service Operating Funds	Monitoring and management by USFWS managers, biologists, field and realty staffs to ensure the long-term health of these habitats. Activities may include burning, mechanical, biological and sometimes chemical treatments.		

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

The Minnesota Biological Survey identifies approximately 248,000 acres of remaining native prairie in Minnesota. Only about half of

these are currently protected. These unprotected prairies remain at high risk of conversion to other uses such as row-crop production, gravel mining, and development. Reduced crop prices have lessened the pace of conversion for now, but these long-term trends haven't gone away. It's imperative that we protect the remaining native prairie as quickly as we can before it is lost.

How does this proposal include leverage in funds or other effort to supplement any OHF appropriation:

This proposal includes \$623,800 in leverage. The USFWS has committed \$250,000 of in-kind staff support from USFWS field staff. A letter has been provided from the USFWS confirming these funds. This phase includes \$123,800 of support from TNC, covering half the cost of Direct Support Service (DSS) with private funds. Finally, this round includes \$250,000 in leverage from a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant for NTP NWR fee acquisition in Minnesota. This NAWCA funding was approved by Congress on May 1, 2017 and signed by the president. However, it is awaiting action at the Department of Interior. The Federal Funds tab includes a button asking if federal leverage is confirmed. Because TNC does not yet have a signed agreement, we chose to answer this 'No'. The Federal Funds tab also asks for an expected date. No date has been provided yet, though we expect approval shortly.

Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

Describe the relationship of the funds:

Not Listed

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
ML 2010	USFWS In-Kind Contribution	\$308,000
ML 2015	TNC Private Contributions	\$14,900
ML 2010	TNC Private Contributions	\$37,700
ML 2011	USFWS In-Kind Contribution	\$144,000
ML 2011	TNC Private Contributions	\$23,200
ML 2012	USFWS In-Kind Contribution	\$139,400
ML 2012	TNC Private Contributions	\$36,100
ML 2014	USFWS In-Kind Contribution	\$67,000
ML 2014	TNC Private Contributions	\$35,700
ML 2015	USFWS In-Kind Contribution	\$52,200

Activity Details

Requirements:

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

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition - **No**

Local governments will be notified in writing of the intent to acquire and donate lands to the US Fish & Wildlife Service, including an offer to answer any questions.

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

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

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **Yes**

Are the funds confirmed - **No**

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds - **September 2017**

Land Use:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **Yes**

Explain

No food plots will be established on OHF acquired properties. Short-term use of agricultural crops is an accepted Best Practice for preparing a site for prairie restoration. For example, short-term use of soybeans could be used for restorations in order to control weed seedbeds prior to prairie plantings. In some cases this necessitates the use of GMO treated products to facilitate herbicide use in order to control weeds present in the seedbank. Neonicotinoid treated seeds will not be used. We would not expect agricultural crop use to exceed 3 years on any given OHF acquired property.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated - **Yes**

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing - **No**

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion - **Yes**

Lands acquired by fee will be open to the public taking of fish and game during the open season according to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, United States Code, title 16, section 668dd, et seq.

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

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the acquisitions on the parcel list - **No**

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition - **No**

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Purchase agreements/Options for the first 320 acres of fee and 595 acres of easement acquisition	December 31, 2019
Purchase agreements/Options for the remaining 325 acres of fee and 600 acres of easement acquisition	June 30, 2021
Grassland/wetland restoration and enhancement completed	June 30, 2023

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$6,175,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$457,000	\$250,000	USFWS	\$707,000
Contracts	\$230,000	\$0		\$230,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$2,000,000	\$250,000	USFWS NAWCA	\$2,250,000
Easement Acquisition	\$2,989,200	\$0		\$2,989,200
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$12,300	\$0		\$12,300
Professional Services	\$279,000	\$0		\$279,000
Direct Support Services	\$123,800	\$123,800	TNC	\$247,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
Supplies/Materials	\$73,700	\$0		\$73,700
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$6,175,000	\$623,800	-	\$6,798,800

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Protection Staff	1.32	3.00	\$361,000	\$0		\$361,000
Project Manager	0.21	3.00	\$62,000	\$0		\$62,000
Grant Administration	0.12	3.00	\$33,000	\$0		\$33,000
Science/Stewardship Staff	0.01	3.00	\$1,000	\$0		\$1,000
USFWS In-Kind Staff Support	0.00	0.00	\$0	\$250,000	USFWS	\$250,000
Total	1.66	12.00	\$457,000	\$250,000	-	\$707,000

Amount of Request: \$6,175,000

Amount of Leverage: \$623,800

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 10.10%

DSS + Personnel: \$580,800

As a % of the total request: 9.41%

Easement Stewardship: \$0

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -%

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 proposed and subsequently approved by the US Dept. of Interior on an annual basis. The portion requested from the grant represents 50% of this rate, with the remaining 50% contributed as leverage.

Does the amount in the contract line include R/E work?

These funds are all for restoration/enhancement work. This program targets lands that are already in good condition. The acquired properties may, however, need some work to get them into a condition where they can be sustained into the future using standard prairie management techniques. The most typical activity is tree or woody vegetation removal, with reseeding of the affected areas. The requested amount is based on our experience in earlier rounds of this program.

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental? - Yes

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging:

Rental car expense is also included.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

The Personnel line item includes USFWS In-Kind support. Fee Acquisition w/o PILT includes leverage from a NAWCA fee acquisition grant. The leverage offered on the DSS line reflects one-half of the Conservancy's federally approved indirect rate. These funds are privately raised.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable? - Yes

Tell us how this project would be scaled and how administrative costs are affected, describe the "economy of scale" and how outputs would change with reduced funding, if applicable:

This request is part of an ongoing NTP NWR acquisition program, allowing us to scale activities up or down depending on available funding. If funding is modified, the balance of fee/easement acquisition would be reviewed to ensure an adequate base level of funding for each activity.

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	645	0	0	645
Protect in Easement	0	1,195	0	0	1,195
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	1,840	0	0	1,840

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	215
Protect in Easement	705
Enhance	0
Total	920

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$2,475,200	\$0	\$0	\$2,475,200
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$3,699,800	\$0	\$0	\$3,699,800
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$6,175,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,175,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	30	0	615	0	645
Protect in Easement	0	60	0	1,135	0	1,195
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	90	0	1,750	0	1,840

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$123,800	\$0	\$2,351,400	\$0	\$2,475,200
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$185,000	\$0	\$3,514,800	\$0	\$3,699,800
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$308,800	\$0	\$5,866,200	\$0	\$6,175,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$3,838	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$3,096	\$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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$4,127	\$0	\$3,823	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$3,083	\$0	\$3,097	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

I have read and understand Section 15 of the Constitution of the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Statute 97A.056, and the Call for Funding Request. I certify I am authorized to submit this proposal and to the best of my knowledge the information provided is true and accurate.

Parcel List

Explain the process used to select, rank and prioritize the parcels:

Parcels are reviewed/approved by both USFWS and TNC staff to ensure they meet this program's objectives. They are then submitted to LSOHC staff for final review/approval. The following criteria are used:

1. Is there native prairie on the tract? If not, is it adjacent to native grasslands? This program focuses on protecting native prairie, as identified by the Biological Survey or trained biologists inspecting the site. Key parcels that buffer native prairie may also be protected.
2. Is it located in a Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan core/corridor/complex? The long-term survival of native prairie is best ensured in functioning landscapes identified in the Plan. Outstanding properties outside of the Plan may be considered.
3. Is it adjacent to an existing complex of protected land? Larger protected blocks are more effective at conserving the full array of wildlife species and diversity. It may also simplify and reduce overall management costs.
4. Was it identified by Biological Survey, TNC, or USFWS biologists as having concentrations of threatened and endangered species and communities? Parcels with greater habitat and species diversity will be given greater priority.
5. Is it suitable for public recreation? Lands purchased in fee title will be open to the public taking of fish and game. Conservation easements purchased with OHF support will be open only with landowner permission.
6. Willing Seller. We only work with willing sellers.
7. Avoiding buildings. Existing buildings pose many challenges. Potential projects with structures are carefully reviewed.

See the attached criteria.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Big Stone

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Big Stone #6	12044205	138	\$332,000	No	No	No
Big Stone #7	12044211	69	\$0	No	No	No

Brown

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Brown #1	10835229	110	\$0	No	No	No

Chippewa

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Chippewa #1	11942218	78	\$146,000	No	No	No

Clay

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Clay #5	13846210	40	\$0	No	Full	Full
Clay #6	14245234	304	\$547,000	No	Full	Full

Lac qui Parle

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Lac qui Parle #1	11742201	47	\$54,000	No	No	No
Lac qui Parle #2	11746213	219	\$432,000	No	No	No
Lac qui Parle #3	11943215	126	\$0	No	No	No
Lac qui Parle #4	11943226	149	\$0	No	No	No
Lac qui Parle #5	11943226	39	\$0	No	No	No

Lincoln

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Lincoln #5	10945216	75	\$0	No	No	No

Lyon

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Lyon #5	11042206	50	\$173,000	No	No	No

Murray

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Murray #6	10643232	80	\$229,000	No	No	No

Norman

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Norman #5	14445228	145	\$196,000	No	Full	Full

Pipestone

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Pipestone #1	10546223	174	\$0	No	No	No
Pipestone #3	10846201	84	\$155,000	No	No	No
Pipestone #4	10846211	76	\$150,000	No	No	No

Pope

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Pope #10	12339234	65	\$208,000	No	Full	Full
Pope #11	12337226	18	\$23,000	No	No	No
Pope #12	12339235	80	\$239,000	No	Full	Full
Pope #8	12439215	103	\$113,000	No	No	No

Renville

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Renville #1	11335207	257	\$0	No	Full	Full

Rock

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Rock #1	10545218	77	\$0	No	Full	Full
Rock #10	10345205	111	\$180,000	No	No	No
Rock #2	10345218	5	\$53,000	No	Full	Full
Rock #4	10346213	12	\$0	No	Full	Full
Rock #7	10446207	90	\$251,000	No	No	No
Rock #8	10446207	42	\$104,000	No	No	No
Rock #9	10446220	58	\$241,000	No	Full	Full

Wilkin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wilkin #1	13646204	27	\$61,000	No	No	No

Yellow Medicine

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
YellowMedicine #2	11546231	87	\$0	No	No	No

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

Kandiyohi

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	# Bldgs?	Bldg Improve Desc	Value of Bldg	Disposition of Improvements
Kandiyohi #5	12236206	149	\$0	4	House, Barn, 2 other outbuildings, all in tear-down condition.	\$0	Remove

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Northern Tallgrass Prairie Northern Tallgrass Prairie - Phase 9

Funding Requested: \$6,175,000



Program Goals

The US Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy will cooperate to protect native prairie and associated habitat in Minnesota for future generations

Phase 9 Goals

The requested funding will allow us to permanently conserve approximately 1,840 acres of habitat in western and central Minnesota, with about 50% native prairie. Planned outcomes include:

- 645 acres of fee acquisition
- 1,195 acres of permanent conservation easements

This work will target areas identified as having significant biodiversity by the Minnesota Biological Survey and as priority areas in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan.

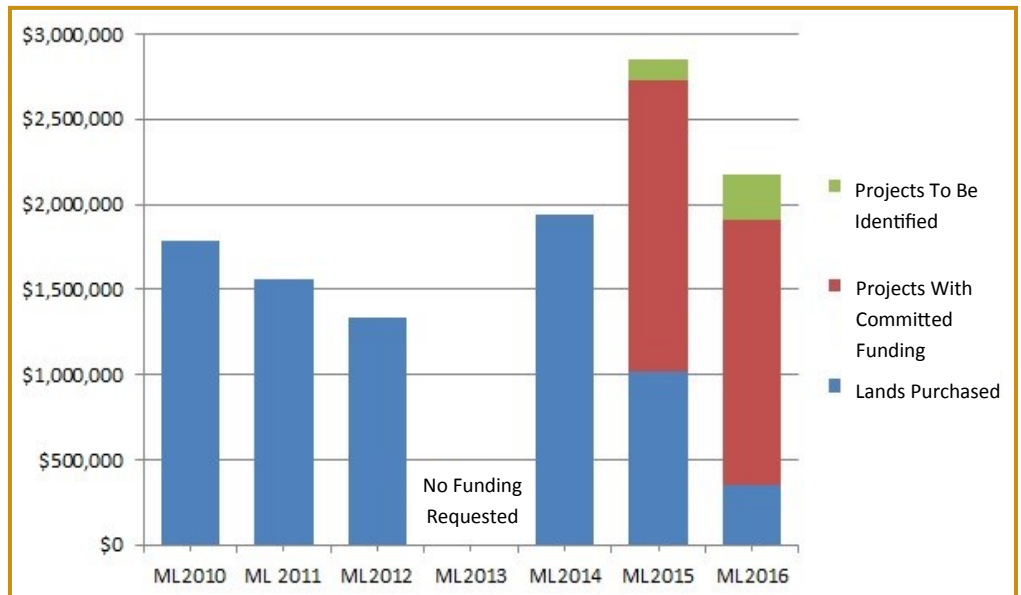


Poweshiek Skipperling on Sunflower - The prairies preserved by this program with OHF funding provide habitat for a wide range of butterflies and other pollinator species.



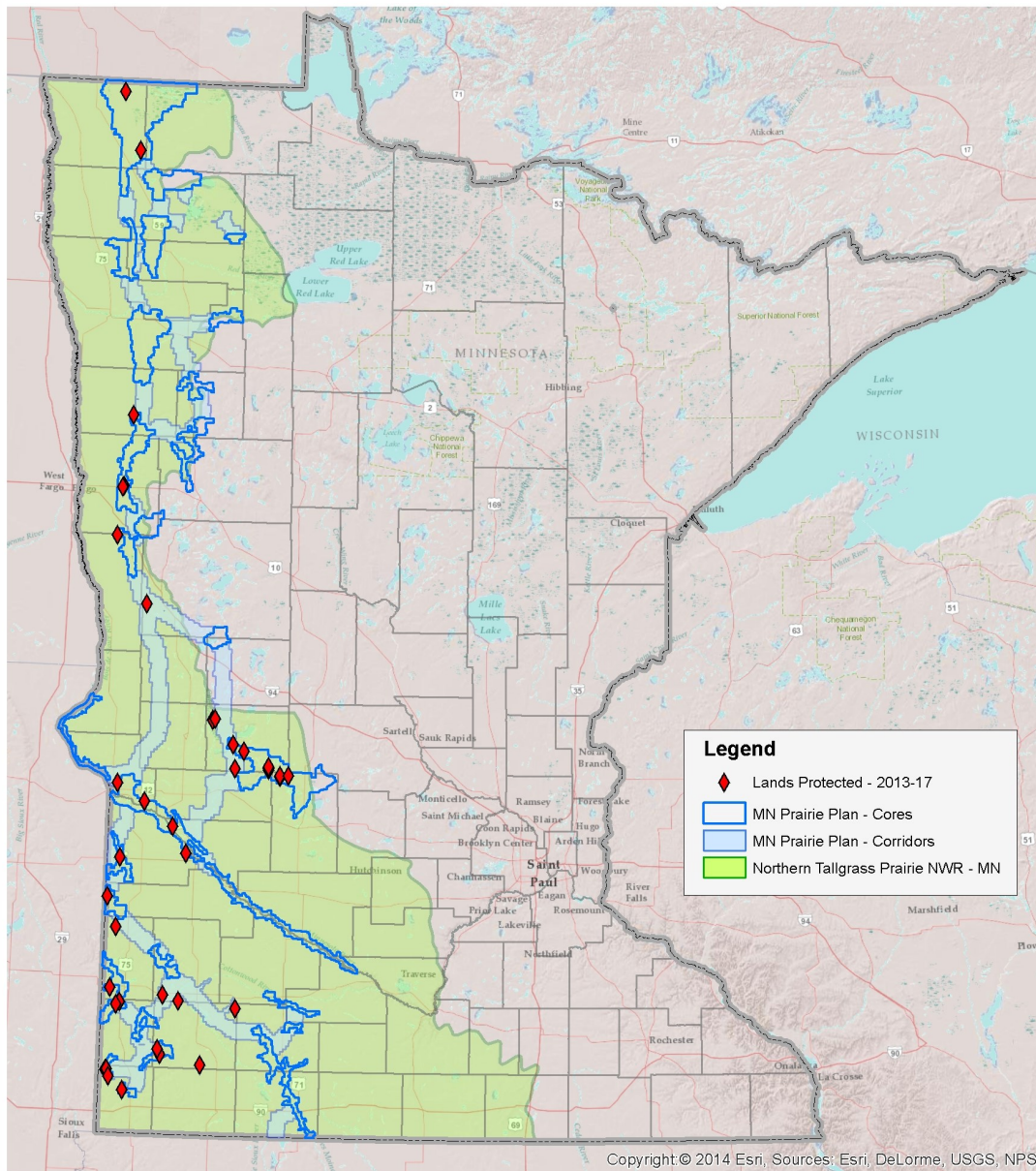
A Trumpeter Swan on Habitat Protected by NTP NWR - This native prairie and wetland complex in central Minnesota was permanently protected with OHF support. This property added to an existing, 1,200-acre block of protected habitat.

Financial Update — Status of Acquisition Funding from Previous OHF Rounds



Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge

Lands Protected 2013-2017



Program Accomplishments through May, 2017

- 4,320 acres of habitat preserved at an approximate cost of \$2,200/acre
- 2,820 acres of native prairie acquired
- 460 acres of wetlands and 11 miles of stream or lake-front protected
- 2,690 acres surveyed by the Minnesota Biological Survey and determined to have significant biodiversity
- 90% of projects completed in MN Prairie Plan priority areas
- Protected habitat for numerous species of concern, including endangered and threatened species. Animal and plant species found on conserved properties include: Baird's sparrow, Wilson's phalarope, Topeka shiner, Dakota skipper, and blanket flower.

Prioritizing Projects

Each project is reviewed using the following criteria:

- 1) Is there native prairie on the tract? If not, is it adjacent to native prairie?
- 2) Is the property in a priority area identified in the MN Prairie Plan?
- 3) Is it adjacent to an existing complex of permanently protected habitat?
- 4) Was it identified by Minnesota Biological Survey as having concentrations of threatened and endangered species and communities?
- 5) Is it suitable for public recreation?



The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.



25 12.5 0 25 Miles
Scale = 1:3,300,000

Created by: RCJ, TNC in MN/ND/SD, 2017/5/24
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Proposal\Attachments\WTP NWR Hearing Map - 20170524.mxd

Parcel Selection Criteria used by the US Fish & Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy for the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Land Acquisition Program

The purpose of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Protection National Wildlife Refuge Program is to accelerate progress towards the US Fish & Wildlife Service's (USFWS) goal of permanently protecting and enhancing 77,000 acres of prairie remnants across the broad area originally covered by the Northern Tallgrass Prairie. The Land Acquisition Program supports the acquisition of fee title or conservation easements in the 49 western Minnesota counties included in the refuge boundary. The USFWS and The Nature Conservancy (Conservancy) are partners in this Program.

Parcels are reviewed by both the USFWS and Conservancy to ensure that they meet the priorities of both partners. They are then submitted to LSOHC staff for final review/approval. This review is based on the following criteria:

1. **Native prairie on all or most of tract, or adjacency to existing native prairie.** The emphasis of this Program is protecting and enhancing native prairie, as identified by DNR Biological Survey or site inspection by trained biologist. Protecting native prairie includes the need to buffer and connect native remnants via restoration of non-native lands. The partners will identify and work with private landowners to acquire tracts that further our shared goal of native prairie conservation, and in particular, those that meet the other criteria listed below.
2. **Within core area boundary or in critical corridors between core areas.** This Program will assist with building "functioning landscapes" by focusing in areas with concentrations of existing native prairie. The 2010 Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan identified 35 prairie cores and corridors within the Refuge. The partners will give priority to those parcels that are within these core areas or that help form critical corridors to maintain landscape function.
3. **Near existing protected lands.** Building larger protected complexes is preferred to simplify and reduce overall management costs and travel time. In general, larger protected blocks are more effective at conserving the full array of wildlife species and biological diversity. The partners will strategically identify properties that are in areas where the USFWS already has a presence and prioritize these higher than those that are isolated.
4. **Greater habitat and species diversity, or host to unique species.** Parcels that host a rare habitat or a continuum of habitats, such as interconnected upland, wetland, riparian, and stream features, will be recognized as having added ecological value and given greater priority. Tracts with underrepresented, small-scale features (e.g. threatened species), will also be prioritized.
5. **Suitability for public recreation.** Constitutional language requires that the lands purchased in fee title be open to the public taking of fish and game. Fee title lands purchased with this grant will be opened. Lands especially suited to these uses will be given a higher priority. Conservation easements purchased with Outdoor Heritage Fund support will be open to hunting only with landowner permission.

6. **Willing Seller.** We will only work with willing sellers, and those that can abide by the statutory process laid out for use of public funds. We work with landowners to ensure that they are comfortable with the Program and how it will affect their property.
7. **Avoid buildings.** Existing buildings pose a challenge because they may not be eligible for Outdoor Heritage Fund use and they require additional effort to demolish or sell. Properties with structures are carefully reviewed to ensure that they do not place an undue burden on the USFWS or Conservancy.