



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

RIM Grassland Reserve - Phase II
Laws of Minnesota 2020 Final Report

General Information

Date: 07/22/2024

Project Title: RIM Grassland Reserve - Phase II

Funds Recommended: \$3,233,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2020, Ch. 104, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd 2(g)

Appropriation Language: \$3,233,000 the second year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to acquire permanent conservation easements and to restore and enhance grassland habitat under Minnesota Statutes, section 103F.501 to 103F.531. Of this amount, up to \$58,000 is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

Manager Information

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Location Information

County Location(s): Pope, Otter Tail, Redwood, Mahnomen, Cottonwood, Grant, Becker, Murray and Rock.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Prairie

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

Using the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program, this project addressed the potential loss of grassland habitats from conversion to cropland and accelerate grassland protection efforts not covered by other programs. Focusing on Minnesota Prairie Plan-identified landscapes and working in coordination with established Prairie Conservation Plan Local Technical Teams (LTTs), this project fulfilled the accomplishment plan goal of enrolling 710 acres of grassland habitat in permanent conservation easements by completing more easements than estimated, for a total of 13 easements. One 110 acre easement along the Chippewa River in Pope County included numerous pollinator plantings in the surrounding cropland as buffer.

Process & Methods

In 2019 alone, over 96,000 acres of Minnesota CRP were set to expire, with an additional 144,554 acres expiring over the next two years. Minnesota was once a land of 18 million acres of prairie. Today less than two percent remains. The few acres of native remnant prairie that remain were once thought of as too rocky or wet for row crops but not anymore. If the current trajectory of grassland and prairie loss continues it will be devastating to grassland wildlife populations, including pollinator species.

This project protected 710 acres of prairie and grassland habitat by coordinating and accelerating the enrollment of Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) through private land easements.

This level of acceleration was needed to address today's rapid loss of grassland habitat and meet the goals set forth in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. Native prairies are often part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and wetlands. These complexes were the top priority for this project using the MN Prairie Plan framework. The priority was to protect expiring CRP with enrollment of adjacent remnant prairie as identified in the MN County Biological Survey. This focus on expiring CRP filled a niche that cannot otherwise be filled by the Native Prairie Bank program. LTTs helped guide restoration strategies such as prescribed burning, conservation grazing and woody tree removal to be used to restore the conditions of moderate quality prairies. In addition, the LTTs identified remnant prairie sites that are not listed on the MN County Biological Survey and updated the survey accordingly. In partnership with the LTTs, the project targeted parcels for protection and tracked and reported the resulting protected acres.

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?

Minnesota grasslands provide important habitat for a wide range of species of greatest conservation need. Consistent with guidance in The Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan and Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, strategic site selection was conducted as well as efforts to minimize landscape stressors and plan for plant diversity and long-term resiliency of project sites. More than 150 Species of Greatest Conservation Need use grasslands for breeding, migration, and/or foraging.

Species that were targeted included: Greater prairie chicken, Eastern meadowlark, Western meadowlark, Grasshopper sparrow, Northern pintail, Northern black duck, Burrowing owl, Chestnut collared longspur, Bobolink, Wilson's phalarope, Sedge wren, Plains hog-nosed snake, American badger, Prairie vole, Plains pocket mouse, Eastern spotted skunk, Dakota skipper, Monarch butterfly, Poweshiek skipper, Regal fritillary, Rusty patched bumble bee.

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.

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Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

Overall our partners within the 11 state Local Technical Teams (LTTs) areas and the individual lead organizers have been supportive and have had the opportunity to review and comment on landowner applications in their prairie core areas. Not all have responded when notified but they have been given the opportunity to contribute. The MNDNR Native Prairie Bank (NPB) staff have been supportive and have assisted with conducting vegetative surveys when asked by Soil & Water Conservation Districts for assistance in determining the quality of the vegetative cover. Most importantly private landowners have been very supportive and enthusiastic about protecting remnant native prairie and are pleased that there is a program available that will permanently protect this extremely important resource on their property. Government has repeatedly told landowners how valuable this resource is while not making available programs for landowners to do so.

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

The expectations of this program is that through word of mouth it will continue to grow as it becomes more familiar to private landowners throughout the state. Targeting non cropland for a program is new thinking and in itself has unique aspects that will take time for landowners to understand the need, opportunity and resources available under this program. The conservation planners and practitioners through SWCDs, and other local governments are learning and increasing outreach to landowners. One of the highest priorities of The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council funding is to protect prairies. This program allows landowners the opportunity to permanently protect remnant prairies.

What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this program?

- N/A

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

Once a RIM easement is acquired, BWSR is responsible for monitoring and enforcement into perpetuity. BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry-out oversight, monitoring and inspection of its conservation easements.

Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs document findings and report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs were calculated at \$6,500 per easement at the time of this proposal. This value is based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner relations and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship cover costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight, and any enforcement necessary.

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$248,400	\$248,400	\$208,900	-	-	-	\$248,400	\$208,900
Contracts	\$18,900	\$28,500	\$28,500	-	-	-	\$18,900	\$28,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,862,300	\$2,853,200	\$2,786,700	-	-	-	\$2,862,300	\$2,786,700
Easement Stewardship	\$58,500	\$58,000	\$58,000	-	-	-	\$58,500	\$58,000
Travel	\$5,700	\$5,700	\$500	-	-	-	\$5,700	\$500
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$28,700	\$28,700	\$100	-	-	-	\$28,700	\$100
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$8,100	\$8,100	-	-	-	-	\$8,100	-
Supplies/Materials	\$2,400	\$2,400	-	-	-	-	\$2,400	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$3,233,000	\$3,233,000	\$3,082,700	-	-	-	\$3,233,000	\$3,082,700

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Mgmt	0.35	5.0	\$176,600	-	-	\$176,600
Esmt Processing	0.12	3.0	\$20,400	-	-	\$20,400
Engineering/Eco Services	0.05	3.0	\$11,900	-	-	\$11,900

Direct Support Services

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

BWSR calculates and periodically reviews and updates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type of work being done

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Despite being at the front-end of a period of rising real estate values, this phase of the program successfully met the easement acreage goals. In order to meet the acreage goals with the applications received, BWSR took 13 easements, rather than the 9 originally planned, which left BWSR with an easement stewardship funding shortage.

Total Revenue: \$0

Revenue Spent: \$0

Revenue Balance: \$0

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

- E. This is not applicable as there was no revenue generated.

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	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	710	710	0	0	0	0	710	710
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	710	710	0	0	0	0	710	710

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	0	0
Protect in Easement	710	532
Enhance	0	0
Total	710	532

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$3,233,000	\$3,082,700	-	-	-	-	\$3,233,000	\$3,082,700
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$3,233,000	\$3,082,700	-	-	-	-	\$3,233,000	\$3,082,700

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	0	0	0	0	0	0

Fee w/o State PILT Liability												
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	710	710	0	0	710	710
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	710	710	0	0	710	710

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$3,233,000	\$3,082,700	-	-	\$3,233,000	\$3,082,700
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$3,233,000	\$3,082,700	-	-	\$3,233,000	\$3,082,700

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

26,716 feet

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

BWSR met the acreage goals for this phase of the program.

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ 710 total acres were acquired through this appropriation. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed during the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes. An increase of native grassland habitat availability within a certain region is expected to increase the carrying capacity of grassland-dependent wildlife within that region. This would have a positive impact on both game and nongame species. We expect more abundant populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these complexes are restored.

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species ~ 710 total acres were acquired through this appropriation. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed during the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes. An increase of native grassland habitat availability within a certain region is expected to increase the carrying capacity of grassland-dependent wildlife within that region. This would have a positive impact on both game and nongame species. We expect more abundant populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these complexes are restored.

Parcels

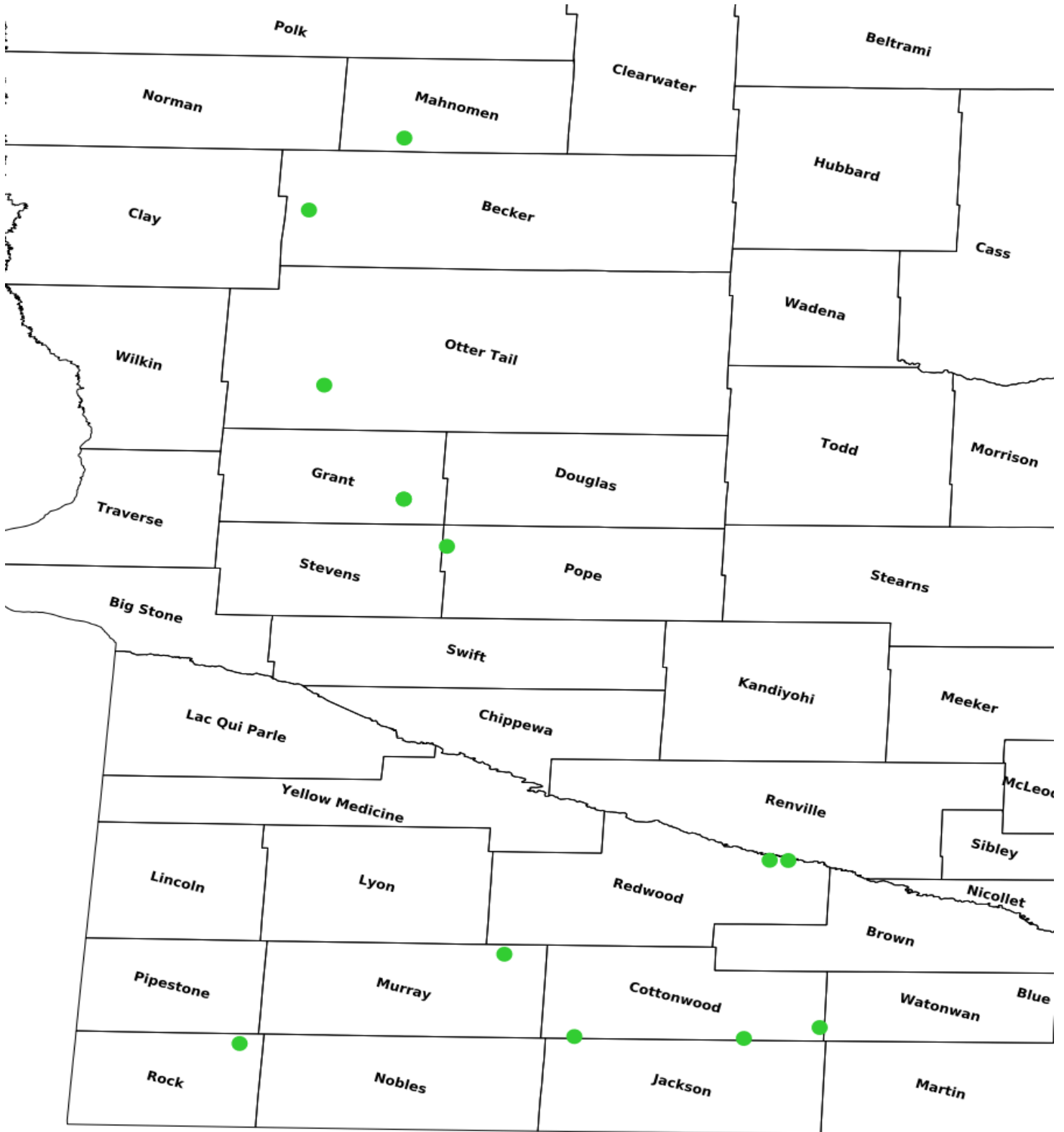
Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes - Sign up criteria is attached](#)

Easement Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
03-01-21-14- -	Becker	14043221	17	\$46,800	No
17-07-20-14- -	Cottonwood	10534213	38	\$212,500	No
17-05-20-14- -	Cottonwood	10535234	42	\$255,800	No
17-06-20-14- -	Cottonwood	10538234	98	\$452,700	No
26-01-21-14- -	Grant	12841232	45	\$152,258	No
26-01-22-14- -	Grant	12841232	8	\$24,168	No
44-01-21-14- -	Mahnomen	14341218	112	\$168,200	No
51-01-20-14- -	Murray	10839217	75	\$382,200	No
56-01-22-14-W-	Otter Tail	13243202	55	\$85,000	No
61-01-22-14- -	Pope	12640231	110	\$321,922	No
64-02-20-14- -	Redwood	11235212	36	\$158,400	No
64-01-22-14- -	Redwood	11234208	20	\$93,800	No
67-01-21-14- -	Rock	10444215	54	\$215,900	No

Parcel Map



0 11 22 33 mi

- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ✚ Other