



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

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### ML 2022 Request for Funding

#### General Information

**Date:** 06/04/2021

**Proposal Title:** RIM Grasslands Reserve Phase IV

**Funds Requested:** \$9,000,000

#### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** John Voz

**Title:** RIM Easement & Working Lands Specialist

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#### Location Information

**County Location(s):**

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Easement

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Prairie

#### Narrative

##### Abstract

Using the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program, this project addresses the potential loss of grassland habitats from conversion to cropland and accelerates grassland protection efforts not covered by other programs. Working in

coordination with 11 established Prairie Conservation Plan Local Technical Teams (LTTs), and local SWCDs this proposal will enroll 1,800 RIM acres (approximately 23 easements), focusing on Minnesota Prairie Plan identified landscapes. This proposal focus is on protecting non-crop moderate to high quality remnant prairies and associated buffer that can be improved through habitat management.

## **Design and Scope of Work**

In 2021 and 2022 an additional 144,000 acres of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will expire. 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 proposal, working in partnership with Prairie Conservation Plan Local Technical Teams (LTTs) and local SWCD's focuses on protecting current grasslands and buffering native prairie that are within wildlife habitat complexes not covered by other conservation programs. There are programs for native prairie such as MNDNR Native Prairie Bank, Federal Native Tallgrass Prairie (NTP) and programs for cropland, but there are no programs for moderate quality prairies that have the potential for higher quality through protection and management. As Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and LTTs review these areas for possible enrollment, they may find additional tracts that are native prairie. With this project, some native prairie may be included to square up parcels. In cases where larger tracts are identified, they will contact the DNR's Biological Survey and Native Prairie Bank staff for a more formal botanical survey of the site.

The loss of native prairie and grassland habitat is arguably the greatest conservation challenge facing northwest, western and southern Minnesota. This proposal aims to protect 1800 acres of prairie and grassland habitat by coordinating and accelerating the enrollment in Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) through private land easements. This level of acceleration is needed to address today's rapid loss of grassland habitat and meet the goals set forth in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan.

A portion of this funding request will be used to contract with the Conservation Corp of Minnesota (CMMI) to encourage young adults from diverse backgrounds to become engaged in conservation, involved in community, and prepare for future employment.

## **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?**

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

Target Species include: 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, Powe sheik skipper, Regal fritillary, Rusty patched bumble bee.

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

Without permanent protection options, these remnant and existing grasslands are under great threat of conversion to row crops. Under the strategic direction provided by the Minnesota Prairie Plan, and recognizing that a new wave of grassland loss is upon us, the RIM program is realigning its targets and priorities. This realignment will ensure that a gap does not exist between programs, and that a private landowner interested in permanent protection of their grassland or prairie has viable options. Funding from this proposal will provide an acceleration of targeted acres enrolled.

## **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:**

Native prairies are often part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and wetlands. These complexes will be the top priority for this project using the MN Prairie Plan framework. A preference will be given to protecting expiring CRP with enrollment of adjacent remnant prairie as identified in the MN County Biological Survey. This focus on expiring CRP will fill a niche that cannot otherwise be filled by the Native Prairie Bank program. LTTs will help 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 will identify remnant prairie sites that are not listed on the MN County Biological Survey and update the survey accordingly. By utilizing the LTTs, parcels will be targeted for protection and resulting acres will be tracked and reportable.

Recent genetic diversity research was conducted on Greater Prairie Chickens by the MNDNR to understand how birds move through the landscape using a new approach called landscape genetics. It found that prairie chickens in the northern part of the sampled area, near Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, are not very connected to prairie chickens in Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin counties to the south. Connecting these areas with high quality habitat would allow more genetic mixing, potentially reduce stress and mortality and eliminate the need for birds to travel long distances to find suitable habitat. This "follow the chicken" approach has worked remarkably well in identifying, targeting and protecting areas that have positive impacts on a wide range of species of greatest conservation need.

## **Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?**

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

## **Which two other plans are addressed in this proposal?**

- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

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

Following guidance in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan and Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan, LTT's will play a key role in project selection. Consistent with the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan there will also be a focus on:

- Stable or increasing native plant diversity, condition and cover;
- Stable or decreasing cover of invasive woody vegetation;

- Establishment of a diverse community of native grasses and forbs with geographically appropriate local ecotypes;
- Supporting diverse populations of native birds and insects, including declining prairie obligate species such as butterfly species, prairie chickens, meadowlarks, sedge wrens and prairie orchids.

### **Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?**

#### **Forest / Prairie Transition**

- Protect, enhance, and restore rare native remnant prairie

#### **Prairie**

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

### **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:**

This program will focus on key parcels in need of protection and restoration using a ranking process and input from LTTs. Without permanent protection options, these grasslands are under great threat of conversion to row crops. This project focuses on LSOHC priorities by ensuring that key core parcels are protected while increasing participation of private landowners in habitat projects, and by restoring and enhancing grassland habitats.

### **What other fund may contribute to this proposal?**

- Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund

### **Does this proposal include leveraged funding?**

No

### **Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.**

This funding request is not supplanting existing funding or a substitution for any previous funding.

### **How will you 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 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 report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted and document findings. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

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

## Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

| Year         | Source of Funds           | Step 1   | Step 2                               | Step 3                                     |
|--------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| 2022-Ongoing | Landowners Responsibility | Maintain compliance with easement terms                          | -                                    | -  |
| 2022-Ongoing | Stewardship Account       | Inspection every year for the first 5 years; then every 3rd year | Corrective actions on any violations | Easement action taken by MN General Office |

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

DNR staff, in consultation with a variety of experts in federal, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other agencies, have compiled a select group of indicator species and associated quantities to be used by any applicant to answer the question above.

#### 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. Each acre of

restored or enhanced grassland could potentially contribute 3 to 8 Monarchs to the population.

#### Mallards

The Federal U.S Fish & Wildlife Service HAPET Duck Pair Accessibility decision support tool can estimate the number of duck pairs that have access to a particular tract or parcel of upland habitat. A biological decision support tool suggests that Mallard (Duck) productivity has a positive linear relationship to the amount of grassland in the landscape.

## How will the program directly involve, engage, and benefit BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and diverse communities:

A portion of this funding request will be used to contract with the Conservation Corp of Minnesota (CMMI) to encourage young adults from diverse backgrounds to become engaged in conservation , involved in community, and prepare for future employment. See attached CCMI letter of support.

## Activity Details

### Requirements

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

Yes

**Is the land you plan to acquire (easement) free of any other permanent protection?**

Yes

### Land Use

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

Yes

#### **Explain what will be planted:**

In certain circumstances food plots for wildlife are an allowable use on RIM easements and must be part of an approved Conservation Plan. Under this proposal no food plots would be allowed on remnant prairies which have never been cultivated (only areas that buffer remnant prairies). Food plots on narrow buffers, steep slopes and wet areas are not allowed but may be offered on any potential surrounding grass buffer on prior cultivated lands. RIM policy limits food plots to 10% of the total easement area or 5 acres whichever is smaller. There is no cost share for establishment of food plots and upon termination and/or abandonment the landowners must reestablish the vegetation as prescribed in the Conservation Plan at their own expense. Food plots are a rarely selected option by landowners, to date only 2.2% of RIM easements have food plots.

**Will the eased land be open for public use?**

No

**Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?**

Yes

#### **Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:**

Existing trails and roads are identified during the easement acquisition process and are often excluded from the easement area if they serve no purpose to easement maintenance, monitoring or enforcement. Some roads and trails, such as agricultural field accesses, are allowed to remain.

**Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition?**

Yes

#### **How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?**

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve Program which has over 7,000 individual easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first five years and then every third year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under

the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

**Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?**

Yes

**Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:**

Though uncommon, there could be a potential for new minimal use trails, if they contribute to easement maintenance or benefit the easement site (e.g. firebreaks, berm maintenance, etc). Unauthorized trails identified during the monitoring process are in violation of the easement.

**How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?**

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve Program which has over 7,000 individual easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

**Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this proposal's funding and availability?**

Yes

**Other OHF Appropriation Awards**

**Have you received OHF dollars in the past through LSOHC?**

Yes

| Approp Year | Approp Amount Received | Amount Spent to Date | Leverage Reported in AP | Leverage Realized to Date | Acres Affected in AP | Acres Affected to Date | Complete/Final Report Approved? |
|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2020        | \$2,387,000            | -                    | -                       | -                         | 438                  | -                      | No                              |
| 2019        | \$2,276,000            | -                    | -                       | -                         | 497                  | 150                    | No                              |

**Timeline**

| Activity Name  | Estimated Completion Date |
|--|---------------------------|
| Enroll 1800 acres into the RIM private land easement program | June 30th, 2027           |
| Final Report Submitted                                       | November 1st, 2028        |

## Budget

### Totals

| Item                          | Funding Request    | Antic. Leverage | Leverage Source | Total              |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Personnel                     | \$184,400          | -               | -               | \$184,400          |
| Contracts                     | \$45,000           | -               | -               | \$45,000           |
| Fee Acquisition w/<br>PILT    | -                  | -               | -               | -                  |
| Fee Acquisition w/o<br>PILT   | -                  | -               | -               | -                  |
| Easement Acquisition          | \$8,513,200        | -               | -               | \$8,513,200        |
| Easement<br>Stewardship       | \$146,300          | -               | -               | \$146,300          |
| Travel                        | \$15,800           | -               | -               | \$15,800           |
| Professional Services         | -                  | -               | -               | -                  |
| Direct Support<br>Services    | \$66,000           | -               | -               | \$66,000           |
| DNR Land Acquisition<br>Costs | -                  | -               | -               | -                  |
| Capital Equipment             | -                  | -               | -               | -                  |
| Other<br>Equipment/Tools      | \$22,500           | -               | -               | \$22,500           |
| Supplies/Materials            | \$6,800            | -               | -               | \$6,800            |
| DNR IDP                       | -                  | -               | -               | -                  |
| <b>Grand Total</b>            | <b>\$9,000,000</b> | <b>-</b>        | <b>-</b>        | <b>\$9,000,000</b> |

### Personnel

| Position       | Annual FTE | Years Working | Funding Request | Antic. Leverage | Leverage Source | Total     |
|----------------|------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Easement Staff | 0.32       | 6.0           | 184400          | -               | -               | \$184,400 |

**Amount of Request:** \$9,000,000

**Amount of Leverage:** -

**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 0.0%

**DSS + Personnel:** \$250,400

**As a % of the total request:** 2.78%

**Easement Stewardship:** \$146,300

**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** 1.72%

**Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable?**

Yes

### If the project received 70% of the requested funding

**Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?**

A 30% reduction in funding would reduce outputs proportionally. Program management costs are the exception, due to program management & oversight remaining consistent regardless of appropriation amount.

**Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?**

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



## If the project received 50% of the requested funding

### Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?

A 50% reduction in funding would reduce outputs proportionally. Program management costs are the exception, due to program management & oversight remaining consistent regardless of appropriation amount.

### Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?

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

## Personnel

### Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

### Please explain the overlap of past and future staffing and position levels previously received and how that is coordinated over multiple years?

This is Phase IV of an ongoing program and these funds will pay for staff time spent on new easements associated with this phase.

## Contracts

### What is included in the contracts line?

The contract line includes costs covered under the SWCD MJPA, \$2000 for staff time per easement acquisition.

## Easement Stewardship

### What is the number of easements anticipated, cost per easement for stewardship, and explain how that amount is calculated?

Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs have been calculated at \$6,500 per easement. 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.

## Travel

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

No

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

The travel line will only be used for traditional travel costs.

### I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:

Yes

## 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.

## **Other Equipment/Tools**

### **Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?**

None anticipated at this time but we keep a small amount in this budget line for contingencies.

## **Federal Funds**

### **Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?**

No

## Output Tables

### Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

| Type                                     | Wetland  | Prairie      | Forest   | Habitat  | Total Acres  |
|--|----------|--------------|----------|----------|--------------|
| 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        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0            |
| Protect in Easement                      | 0        | 1,800        | 0        | 0        | 1,800        |
| Enhance                                  | 0        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0            |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>0</b> | <b>1,800</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>1,800</b> |

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

| Type                                     | Native Prairie (acres) |
|--|------------------------|
| Restore                                  | 0                      |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0                      |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability  | 0                      |
| Protect in Easement                      | 1,800                  |
| Enhance                                  | 0                      |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>1,800</b>           |

### Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

| Type                                     | Wetland  | Prairie            | Forest   | Habitat  | Total Funding      |
|--|----------|--------------------|----------|----------|--------------------|
| Restore                                  | -        | -                  | -        | -        | -                  |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | -        | -                  | -        | -        | -                  |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability  | -        | -                  | -        | -        | -                  |
| Protect in Easement                      | -        | \$9,000,000        | -        | -        | \$9,000,000        |
| Enhance                                  | -        | -                  | -        | -        | -                  |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>-</b> | <b>\$9,000,000</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>\$9,000,000</b> |

### Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

| Type                                     | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie      | N. Forest | Total Acres  |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| 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           | 0              | 0         | 0            | 0         | 0            |
| Protect in Easement                      | 0           | 450            | 0         | 1,350        | 0         | 1,800        |
| Enhance                                  | 0           | 0              | 0         | 0            | 0         | 0            |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>0</b>    | <b>450</b>     | <b>0</b>  | <b>1,350</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>1,800</b> |

### Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

| Type                                     | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie     | SE Forest | Prairie            | N. Forest | Total Funding      |
|--|-------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Restore                                  | -           | -                  | -         | -                  | -         | -                  |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | -           | -                  | -         | -                  | -         | -                  |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability  | -           | -                  | -         | -                  | -         | -                  |
| Protect in Easement                      | -           | \$2,000,000        | -         | \$7,000,000        | -         | \$9,000,000        |
| Enhance                                  | -           | -                  | -         | -                  | -         | -                  |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>-</b>    | <b>\$2,000,000</b> | <b>-</b>  | <b>\$7,000,000</b> | <b>-</b>  | <b>\$9,000,000</b> |

### Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

| Type    | Wetland | Prairie | Forest | Habitat |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| Restore | -       | -       | -      | -       |

|  |   |         |   |   |
|--|---|---------|---|---|
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | -       | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability  | - | -       | - | - |
| Protect in Easement                      | - | \$5,000 | - | - |
| Enhance                                  | - | -       | - | - |

### Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

| Type                                     | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| Restore                                  | -           | -              | -         | -       | -         |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | -           | -              | -         | -       | -         |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability  | -           | -              | -         | -       | -         |
| Protect in Easement                      | -           | \$4,444        | -         | \$5,185 | -         |
| Enhance                                  | -           | -              | -         | -       | -         |

### Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

## 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 ~ *A summary of the total acres acquired through this appropriation will be reported. 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 non game 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 ~ *A summary of the total acres acquired through this appropriation will be reported. 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 non-game species. We expect more abundant populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these complexes are restored.*

## Parcels

### Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes](#)

#### **Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:**

Through a combination of eligibility screening and a scoring and ranking process, each application will be assessed on its potential

to restore functions and values (optimize wildlife habitat benefits) and to provide other landscape benefits. Each site is

considered on its benefits to the surrounding landscape, as well as the site-specific features which highlight the benefits of selection

for permanent protection. During the application process, a review of adjacent permanent habitat and easement size is conducted to indicate a site's usefulness as a corridor or extension to an existing habitat complex.

# RIM Grassland Reserve Phase IV

## Grasslands at Risk

- In 2020 and 2021 over 144,000 acres of CRP will expire in Minnesota, including some remnant native habitats.
- Loss of native prairies has significant implications for 150+ Species of Greatest Conservation Need that rely on grasslands such as Greater Prairie Chicken, Meadowlarks, Northern pintail, and many butterfly species.

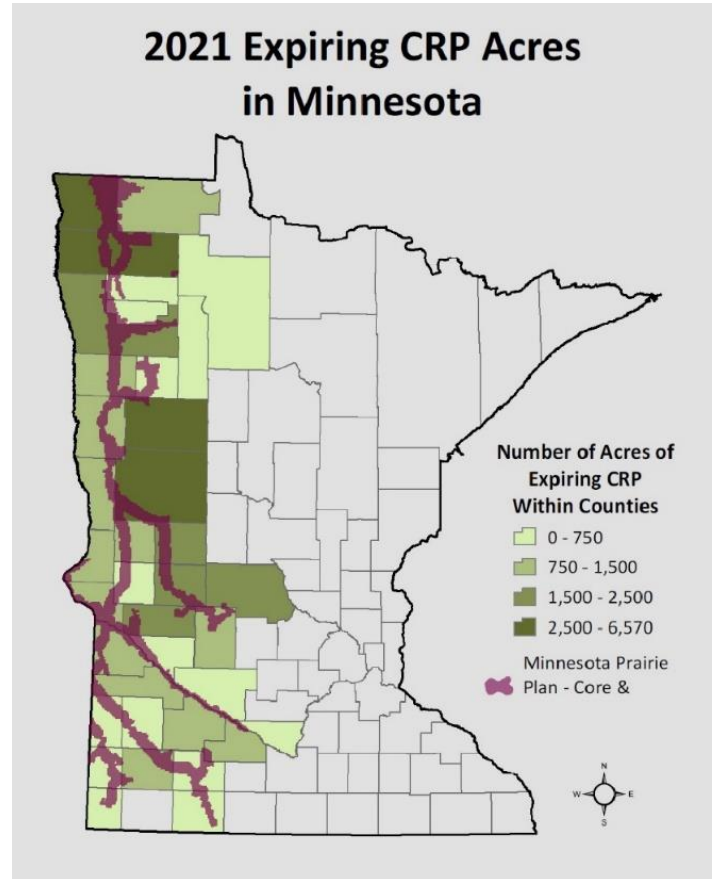
## Project Request

\$9 million for conservation easements providing permanent protection of 1800 acres of high priority grassland acres.

## Project Benefits

This program is structured to maximize landscape and other benefits including:

- Benefiting a wide range of grassland dependent wildlife including endangered birds and butterflies.
- Helping to protect the genetic diversity of grassland plants and animals.
- Using the expertise of 11 Minnesota Prairie Plan Local Technical Teams.
- Creating and sustaining Minnesota jobs.



## How this Program Will Work

- Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) is Minnesota's primary private lands easement program, focused on restoring wetland and upland habitats.
- Protecting and restoring remnant native prairie as part of habitat complexes (focus on Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan identified landscapes).
- Focusing on non-crop moderate quality native prairies including buffering adjacent cropland (expiring CRP) that can be enhanced through restoration activities.
- Ranking and project guidance by 11 Local Prairie Plan technical teams.
- Achieving restoration through prescribed burning, woody vegetation removal and planting of local ecotype seed in areas buffering native prairie.



A portion of this funding request will be used to contract with the Conservation Corp of Minnesota and Iowa (CCMI) to encourage young adults from diverse backgrounds to become engaged in conservation, involved in community, and prepare for future employment.

### For More Information:

**John Voz**  
RIM Easement & Working Lands  
Specialist(218) 846 8426  
[John.Voz@state.mn.us](mailto:John.Voz@state.mn.us)



# RIM Grassland Reserve

|                         |                        |              |       |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------|
| Landowner/Project Name: | County (Field Office): | Prepared By: | Date: |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------|

**Offer must meet the minimum criteria outlined in the SWCD/LTT guidance document to be eligible.**

| Factors   | Possible Points                      | Score    |
|---|--------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Prairie Plan Priority Areas</b>  |                                      |          |
| <b>1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Core</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Corridor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Ag Matrix</li> </ul>   | 25 pts<br>20 pts<br>0 pts            | 0        |
| <b>Risk of Conversion:</b>  |                                      |          |
| <b>2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> High(&lt; 5yrs. CRP)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medium(&gt;5yrs. CRP)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Low-(Isolated, Regulated)</li> </ul>  | 20 pts<br>10 pts<br>0 pts            | 0        |
| <b>Proximity to core, corridor and existing protected grassland complex &gt; 160 ac.</b>  |                                      |          |
| <b>3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Immediately adjacent to a protected habitat within core or corridor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Within 1/2 mile</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Within 1 mile</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> &gt; 1 mile</li> </ul>   | 15 pts<br>10 pts<br>5 pts<br>0 pts   | 0        |
| <b>Site Characteristics-check all that apply</b>  |                                      |          |
| <b>4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wetland present or restoration potential</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Riparian to lake or stream</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> T &amp; E Species within 1/2 mi.</li> </ul>  | 5 pts<br>5 pts<br>5 pts              | 0        |
| <b>Vegetative Diversity</b>   |                                      |          |
| <b>5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> &gt; 20 Native species exist or planted</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 5 - 20 Native species</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> &lt; 5 Native species</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Restoration Needed-reseeding, site dominated by invasive species or subject to woody encroachment</li> </ul> | 10 pts<br>5 pts<br>0 pts<br>(10) pts | 0        |
| <b>Combined Easement Size</b>   |                                      |          |
| <b>6</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Regional Significance or &gt; 80 ac.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 41 - 80 ac.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 10 - 40 ac.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> &lt; 10 ac.</li> </ul>  | 15 pts<br>10 pts<br>5 pts<br>0 pts   | 0        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |                                      | <b>0</b> |



## RIM Grassland Reserve Phase IV scoresheet

|                         |                        |              |       |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------|
| Landowner/Project Name: | County (Field Office): | Prepared By: | Date: |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------|

**Offer should follow the 2018 Minnesota Prairie Plan Strategic Guide - Outcome 2: Prairie Landscape or Restoration Strategy 1, 2 & 3 and associated action items.**

|          | Factors  | Possible Points   | Score |
|----------|--|---|-------|
| <b>1</b> | <p><b>Prairie Plan Priority Areas</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Core</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Corridor</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Ag Matrix</p>  | <p>25 pts</p> <p>20 pts</p> <p>0 pts</p>                | 0     |
| <b>2</b> | <p><b>Risk of Conversion:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> High-(&lt; 5yrs. CRP)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Medium(&gt;5yrs. CRP)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Low-(Isolated, Regulated)</p>  | <p>20 pts</p> <p>10 pts</p> <p>0 pts</p>                | 0     |
| <b>3</b> | <p><b>Proximity to core, corridor and existing protected grassland complex &gt; 160 ac.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Immediately adjacent to a protected habitat within core or corridor</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Within 1/2 mile</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Within 1 mile</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> &gt; 1 mile</p>            | <p>15 pts</p> <p>10 pts</p> <p>5 pts</p> <p>0 pts</p>   | 0     |
| <b>4</b> | <p><b>Site Characteristics-check all that apply</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Wetland present or restoration potential</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Riparian to lake or stream</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> T &amp; E Species within 1/2 mi.</p>   | <p>5 pts</p> <p>5 pts</p> <p>5 pts</p>                  | 0     |
| <b>5</b> | <p><b>Vegetative Diversity</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> &gt; 20 Native species exist or planted</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 - 20 Native species</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> &lt; 5 Native species</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Restoration Needed-reseeding, site dominated by invasive species or subject to woody encroachment</p> | <p>10 pts</p> <p>5 pts</p> <p>0 pts</p> <p>(10) pts</p> | 0     |
|          | <p><b>Combined Easement Size</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Regional Significance or &gt; 80 ac.</p>  | <p>15 pts</p>   |       |

|              |                          |             |        |          |
|--------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------|----------|
| <b>6</b>     | <input type="checkbox"/> | 41 - 80 ac. | 10 pts | 0        |
|              | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 - 40 ac. | 5 pts  |          |
|              | <input type="checkbox"/> | < 10 ac.    | 0 pts  |          |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |                          |             |        | <b>0</b> |



resources restored. lives changed.

May 27, 2021

John Voz, RIM Easement & Working Lands Specialist  
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)  
USFW Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District  
1732 North Tower Road  
Detroit Lakes, MN 56501

Dear John,

On behalf of Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI), I am writing to confirm our interest in and support for the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR) proposal LSHOC to build new partner and project opportunities for CCMI to work with the RIM Easement program to conduct habitat conservation and maintenance activities on select remnant prairie and grassland areas throughout Minnesota.

With a longstanding proven partnership serving areas across Minnesota, this proposal builds on our organizations' mutual interests in providing high-quality and equitable training experiences for young people from diverse urban and rural backgrounds who have a passion for hands-on, service learning and environmental stewardship.

BWSR envisions working with the CCMI to build project opportunities that will help us tackle mutual objectives: attract and train the next generation natural resource professionals; and to recruit and retain more of these young professionals to be from previously underrepresented populations and BIPOC communities to prepare them for careers in the natural resource sector.

This program opportunity is a keen fit with CCMI's vision which is a world where everyone has equitable access to nature, is equipped to succeed in career and life, and is empowered to make a difference in conserving natural resources.

We are excited to learn more about this potential opportunity in the future and look forward to working with BWSR and LSHOC as further developments evolve. CCMI and our program team is ready and available to assist in further design and thinking about how best to ensure success with these objectives.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Murphy".

Mark Murphy  
Executive Director

[conservationcorps.org](http://conservationcorps.org)

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