



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Working Lands for Habitat
ML 2023 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 09/08/2022

Proposal Title: Working Lands for Habitat

Funds Requested: \$6,000,000

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Bill Penning

Title: Conservation Programs Consultant

Organization: Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

Address: 394 S Lake Ave #403

City: Duluth, MN 55803

Email: wlpenning@gmail.com

Office Number:

Mobile Number: 6514927593

Fax Number:

Website: bwsr.state.mn.us

Location Information

County Location(s):

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Prairie
- Southeast Forest
- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Prairie
- Habitat
- Wetlands

Narrative

Abstract

Producer driven inquiries and significant land conversion pressure away from grazing lands has developed growing interest from SWCD's and conservation partners to develop a program that keeps cattle on the landscape while maintaining and improving wildlife habitat and protecting and improving water quality. RIM easements that allow long-term grazing coupled with approved grazing plans that take wildlife and water quality into consideration will be utilized to protect approximately 1580 acres. Prioritization criteria are developed to give the highest return on conservation investment, water quality benefits, large block connectivity of grassland complexes and implementation of Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan priorities.

Design and Scope of Work

Loss of grasslands, particularly grass grazed by large ungulates is of significant concern to the natural resource management community. Although CRP provides significant tall grassland habitat (yet CRP has declined dramatically in MN since the 2000's) it is generally not hayed or grazed sufficiently to benefit shorter-grass species like bobolink, meadowlark, and longspurs. These species are all in decline. Likewise overgrazed pasture can negatively affect both wildlife and water quality. Properly managed grazing is essential to maintaining grassland health and diversity. The intent of this program is to protect, enhance and restore properly managed grasslands that provide not only improved grassland habitat and water quality but continuing long-term economic benefit for landowners. RIM easements that allow long-term grazing coupled with approved grazing plans that take wildlife and water quality into consideration will be utilized to protect approximately 1580 acres. In addition to improving grassland quality there will be a focus on getting cattle out of sensitive water bodies by fencing and providing alternate water sources. This will reduce erosion, improve water quality and improve downstream fish habitat in rivers and lakes. Prioritization criteria are developed to give the highest return on conservation investment, water quality benefits, large block connectivity of grassland complexes and implementation of Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan priorities. A local technical advisory committee made up of BWSR, SWCD, agency and NGO partners will score, rank and identify priority parcels. This partnership will solicit applications from willing landowners and work collaboratively to share multiple-agency conservation program availability in what is intended to be a sustained long-term protection program. This program will encourage a working lands approach while prioritizing grassland multiple benefit protection values. Significant detail regarding the resource being protected will be identified in the management plans to include but not limited to a grazing management plan that protects the form and function of grassland ecological values, ground water and surface water hydrology management, adaptations for changing environmental conditions, promotion of soil health, and allowance for other compatible conservation practices over time. Our intent is to make this a statewide program, however if insufficient funding is secured we may scale back to targeted areas of the state. Although these areas have not been chosen yet we expect significant demand from northwest, central and southeast portions of the state Minnesota. In addition several SWCDs have expressed interest in developing grazing plan writing and implementation capacity which can be facilitated via this program. In 2020 BWSR received \$1M in Capitol Investment (Bonding) funds to implement a working lands program in three watersheds in north central Minnesota. This program is an outgrowth of that program and much of the work necessary to design and implement these programs has already been completed. Although limited both geographically and financially, there seems to be significant interest by producers that are committed to environmentally sensitive grazing management so they can keep their family farms.

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. Species expected to benefit include: Greater prairie chicken, Sharp-tailed grouse, Eastern meadowlark, Western meadowlark, Upland sandpiper, 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, Powesheik skipper, Regal fritillary, and 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?

In addition to a 99% loss of native prairie in Minnesota, CRP declined from a high of 1.7 million acres to approximately 1 million acres as of 2021, most of which was converted to row crop agriculture. Minnesota also lost 2 million acres of grassland to row crop conversion from 2012 to 2019. The cattle industry in Minnesota has been in long-term decline since the 1960's when there were approximately 4.5 million cows in Minnesota to 2020 when that number had dropped to 2.2 million, a roughly 50% decline. In some parts of the state there are so few cattle left that we no longer have the opportunity to have a landscape level effect using grazing to manage grassland habitat. This trend will continue unless we find a way to keep producers in business while maximizing ecological benefits. We can still make a difference in some places.

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:

Pastures, both native and planted, are often part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and wetlands. These complexes will be the top priority for this project. The scoring and ranking process (see attached score sheet) evaluates a number of factors such as adjacency to permanently protected land, size, feet of shoreline, habitat score, resiliency, TMDLS, and other factors to ensure that the parcels that can maximize habitat values by building on existing complexes, being in high value wildlife areas, improving downstream water quality and aquatic habitat, are enrolled into the program. A local technical team composed of SWCD, BWSR, agency (such as NRCS grazing experts), NGO, and other experts as appropriate will vet each application and make funding recommendations to BWSR.

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:

Implementation of this program will meet important criteria in a number of plans by protecting and building habitat complexes, reducing the loss of grasslands, improving wildlife and aquatic habitat, protecting and enhancing habitat of grassland dependent Species of Greatest Conservation Need and improving water quality.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, restore, and enhance habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need

Northern Forest

- Protect shoreland and restore or enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, cold water lakes, streams and rivers, and spawning areas

Prairie

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

Southeast Forest

- Restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in area in recent decades

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 enhancement/restoration using a ranking process and input from local technical committees. Without permanent protection options, these grasslands are under great threat of conversion to row crops. The resulting loss of grasslands and cattle will diminish our ability to use grazing as a management tool to provide grassland habitat for a number of species that require shorter grass. This project focuses on LSOHC priorities by ensuring that key parcels are protected and properly managed while increasing participation of private landowners in habitat projects, and by restoring and enhancing grassland habitats and improving aquatic habitat..

What other fund may contribute to this proposal?

- N/A

Does this proposal include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

One million dollars of Capital Investment funds are in-hand and have been allocated to develop a grazing program in central Minnesota. Additionally, we expect the program will utilize grazing plans written primarily by NRCS staff and EQIP funds will partially fund infrastructure such as fencing and alternative water sources that facilitate rotational grazing and keeping cattle from sensitive water bodies.

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.

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

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:

For our statewide programs, BWSR will pilot designating a percentage of the easement acquisition budget line for applicants who self-certify as emerging farmers or from underserved populations, including Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). If funds remain at the end of a predetermined number of scoring/ranking periods and there are no additional applicants, the remaining funds would be added to the larger easement acquisition pool of funding.

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?

No

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:

For the most part lands enrolled will be currently grazed working lands. As such, field access roads and trails are likely to be present.

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 7,250 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. Grazing plans have maps that can be referred to that show all existing and approved infrastructure such as roads and fences.

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:

There could potentially be new field roads created if conservation grazing management needs change. For example a field road to access a watering facility that keeps cattle from sensitive water resources.

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 7,250 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 .Grazing plans have maps that can be referred to that show all existing and approved infrastructure such as roads and fences.

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 that are current open appropriations?

No

Timeline

| Activity Name | Estimated Completion Date |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Enroll 1580 acres into the RIM private land easement program | June 30th, 2028 |
| Implementation of grazing plans | No later than June 30th, 2032 |

Budget**Totals**

| Item | Funding Request | Antic. Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Personnel | \$172,200 | \$34,400 | Bonding | \$206,600 |
| Contracts | \$40,000 | \$8,000 | Bonding | \$48,000 |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | \$5,504,100 | \$929,200 | Bonding | \$6,433,300 |
| Easement Stewardship | \$130,000 | - | Bonding | \$130,000 |
| Travel | \$10,500 | \$1,800 | Bonding | \$12,300 |
| Professional Services | \$76,000 | \$15,200 | Bonding | \$91,200 |
| Direct Support Services | \$47,700 | \$8,100 | Bonding | \$55,800 |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | \$15,000 | \$2,500 | Bonding | \$17,500 |
| Supplies/Materials | \$4,500 | \$800 | Bonding | \$5,300 |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - |
| Grand Total | \$6,000,000 | \$1,000,000 | - | \$7,000,000 |

Personnel

| Position | Annual FTE | Years Working | Funding Request | Antic. Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Easements staff | 0.28 | 3.0 | \$172,200 | \$34,400 | Bonding | \$206,600 |

Amount of Request: \$6,000,000**Amount of Leverage:** \$1,000,000**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 16.67%**DSS + Personnel:** \$219,900**As a % of the total request:** 3.67%**Easement Stewardship:** \$130,000**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** 2.36%**Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:**

\$1,000,000 in Capital Improvement (Bonding) funds to BWSR are in hand.

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 (which are a small but important part of the overall ask), 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. DSS is proportionately reduced.

If the project received 50% 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 (which are a small but important part of the overall ask), 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. DSS is proportionately reduced.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

No

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

The contracts line amount will be used for payments to SWCD staff for easement implementation. Estimated restoration costs are included in the easements acquisition line.

Easement Stewardship

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

20 easements at \$6,500 per easement. 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 covers 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 annually 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?

Steel posts and signs to mark the easement boundaries.

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 | - | 1,580 | - | - | 1,580 |
| Enhance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 0 | 1,580 | 0 | 0 | 1,580 |

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 | 1,580 |
| Enhance | 0 |
| Total | 1,580 |

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 | - | \$6,000,000 | - | - | \$6,000,000 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | - | \$6,000,000 | - | - | \$6,000,000 |

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 | 395 | 395 | 395 | 395 | 1,580 |
| Enhance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 0 | 395 | 395 | 395 | 395 | 1,580 |

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 | - | \$1,500,000 | \$1,500,000 | \$1,500,000 | \$1,500,000 | \$6,000,000 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | - | \$1,500,000 | \$1,500,000 | \$1,500,000 | \$1,500,000 | \$6,000,000 |

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 | - | \$3,797 | - | - |
| 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 | - | \$3,797 | \$3,797 | \$3,797 | \$3,797 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced aspen parklands and riparian areas ~ *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 grassland habitat availability within aspen parklands is expected to increase the carrying capacity of grassland-dependent wildlife. 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 the northern forest region:

- Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors ~ *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 grassland habitat and improved riparian habitat availability is expected to increase the carrying capacity of grassland-dependent and riparian wildlife as well as downstream aquatic resources. 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 protected and properly managed.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *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. Protection of grazing lands that create wildlife corridors linking habitat blocks such as those identified in the Prairie Plan will be prioritized. 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 protected and properly managed.*

Programs in southeast forest region:

- Rivers, streams, and surrounding vegetation provide corridors of habitat ~ *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 grassland habitat and improved riparian habitat availability is expected to increase the carrying capacity of grassland-dependent and riparian wildlife as well as downstream aquatic resources. 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 protected and properly managed.*

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. Landowners with existing but not implemented grazing plans will be given priority.

May 26, 2022

RIM Working Lands for Habitat

Managed Grass in Decline

- The number of cows in Minnesota has decreased by 50% since the 1960's. There has been a subsequent loss of pastures.
- Since 2020 over 226,700 acres of CRP has/will expire in Minnesota, including remnant native habitats.
- Over the next five years, 2022-2026, 350,000 additional acres will expire.
- Loss of grassland and pasture has significant implications for over 150 Species of Greatest Conservation Need that rely on grasslands such as Sharp-tailed Grouse, Upland Sandpiper, Bobolink and many butterfly species.



Project Request

- \$6 million for conservation easements providing permanent protection and grassland renewal using cattle of 1,580 acres of high value grassland acres.

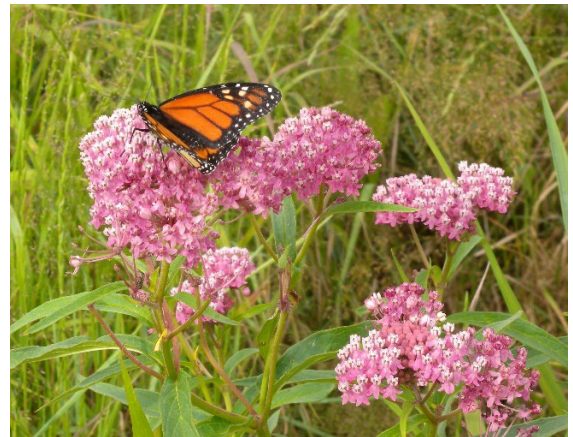
Project Benefits

- This program is structured to maximize landscape and other benefits including:
 - Benefiting a wide range of grassland dependent wildlife including Species of Greatest Conservation Need.
 - Improving downstream and wetland water quality and improving aquatic habitat.
 - Using the expertise of local technical teams.
 - Protecting family farms while implementing good grazing management.



How this Program Will Work

- Voluntarily removing cattle from sensitive riparian and wetland areas will reduce erosion, sedimentation and nutrient loading and improve downstream aquatic habitat.
- Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) is Minnesota's primary private lands easement program.
- Protecting and enhancing grazing land as part of habitat complexes will provide needed short-grass habitat for a variety of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.
- Focusing on preventing existing grazing lands from being converted to row crops and preserving/creating habitat complexes and corridors.
- Ranking and project guidance by local technical teams.



For More Information:

Bill Penning

Conservation Programs Consultant

(651) 262-6403

bill.penning@state.mn.us



RIM WORKING LANDS ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS SCORING SHEET

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Landowner Name: | County/SWCD Office: |
| <div></div> | <div></div> |

Total Score

0

1. APPROVED GRAZING PLAN *(maximum score 15)*

Score

- ☐ a. Approved and fully implemented grazing plan or recently expired EQIP contract (15 pts)
- ☐ b. Approved and partially implemented grazing plan or applied for EQIP and not funded (10 pts)
- ☐ c. Approved but not implemented grazing plan (5 pts)

2. SIZE OF OFFER *(maximum score 10)*

Score

- ☐ a. > 320 acres (10 pts)
- ☐ b. 150 – 320 acres (5 pts)

3. ADJACENT TO PERMANENTLY PROTECTED LAND *(maximum score 5)*

Score

- ☐ a. Yes (5 pts)
- ☐ b. No (0 pts)

4. LANDOWNER ENROLLED IN AG WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
(maximum score 5)

Score

- ☐ a. Yes (5 pts)
- ☐ b. No (0 pts)

5. SHORELINE LINEAR FEET:

Total shoreline length of lakes, rivers, or public ditches in linear feet. Includes both sides of the watercourse/waterbody. One point per 660 ft.
(maximum score 10)

Score

6. CROPLAND CONVERSION:

Percent of offer converted from cropland to grassland/silvopasture in the last 5 years or will be converted upon easement completion
(maximum score 16)

Score

- ☐ a. 76–100% (16 pts)
- ☐ b. 51–75% (12 pts)
- ☐ c. 26–50% (8 pts)
- ☐ d. 0–25% (4 pts)

7. HABITAT SCORE (maximum score 10)

Score

- ☐ a. > 50% of offered area has high rank in Wildlife Action Network or within Important Bird Area (10 pts)
- ☐ b. > 50% of offered area has medium high rank in Wildlife Action Network (5 pts)

8. TNC MULTIPLE BENEFITS SCORE (maximum score 15)

Score

- ☐ 2nd Quartile ☐ 3rd Quartile ☐ 4th Quartile

9. TNC RESILIENT AND CONNECTED NETWORK SCORE (maximum score 5)

Score

- ☐ a. Climate Resilient Site Score (3 pts)
- ☐ b. Connectivity and Climate Flow Score (2 pts)

10. ALTERNATE WATERSOURCE: Another water source available other than natural watercourse/waterbody (maximum score 5)

Score

- ☐ a. Yes (5 pts)
- ☐ b. No (0 pts)

11. WELLHEAD PROTECTION: > 50% of offered area ranked Very High (VH) or High (H) Vulnerability within Drinking Water Supply Management Area Vulnerability (maximum score 10)

Score

- ☐ a. Yes (10 pts)
- ☐ b. No (0 pts)

12. TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD: Implementation of grazing plan will address water quality concerns for conventional pollutants identified in the TMDL. Must be within 1/4 mile of listed water or tributary. (maximum score 5)

Score

- ☐ a. Yes (5 pts)
- ☐ b. No (0 pts)

13. GRAZING SITE LISTED AS PRIORITY IN 1W1P/WATER PLAN (maximum score 5)

Score

- ☐ a. Yes (5 pts)
- ☐ b. No (0 pts)

APPLICATION FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I attest that this application has been reviewed by the program technical committee and selected for funding.

BWSR Program Staff Signature

Date