



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Enhanced Public Land - Grasslands - Phase VI

ML 2023 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/01/2022

Proposal Title: Enhanced Public Land - Grasslands - Phase VI

Funds Requested: \$4,438,300

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Alexander Nelson

Title: MN Restoration Manager

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Location Information

County Location(s):

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

- Restore
- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

Narrative

Abstract

11,000 acres of grassland and wetland habitat will be enhanced or restored through this proposal to benefit upland dependent species on Minnesota lands open to public hunting. These include Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA), and National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). We will accomplish this by working with our partners to follow best practices to conduct wetland restorations, conservation grazing, invasive tree removal, prescribed fire, and diversity seeding in the prairie, forest/prairie transition, and metro regions.

Design and Scope of Work

Restoration and enhancement of prairie and wetland habitat remains as one of the core strategies of the MN Prairie Conservation Plan. Many native and restored prairies are degraded from lack of disturbance, low diversity and spread of invasive trees. There are wetlands in these landscapes that need be to restored and many previously restored basins that are in need of repair. This proposal aims to build on past investments to improve habitat on WPAs, WMAs, and NWRs so they can reach their full potential for wildlife production.

Activities include the following:

- 1) Wetlands will be restored/enhanced by removing drain tile, constructing/repairing earthen dams and/or water control structures, removing sediment and invasive narrow leaf cattail control. Wetlands targeted for enhancement are vital to providing food, cover, and the space required for breeding waterfowl while being essential to water quality and aquifer recharge.
- 2) A diverse mixture of native grasses and forbs is ideal for nesting and brood rearing of upland nesting birds and essential for pollinator species. Many WMAs, WPAs, or NWRs were purchased in sub-optimal habitat condition (e.g. monotype of brome grass). We will use a site-specific combination of techniques (e.g. cultivation, tree removal, herbicide, and prescribed fire) to bring back productivity to these public lands. In close collaboration with the land managers, we will seed a diverse mix of native grasses and forbs that are well adapted to site conditions. Mowing will be used as needed to manage annual weed pressure to ensure establishment.
- 3) Prescribed burning is the primary tool for managing grassland habitat. It increases vigor, sets back invasive woody species, and removes built up residue.
- 4) Conservation grazing is an important enhancement tool for sites that are difficult to conduct prescribed fires or need to target specific enhancement needs (e.g. cool season grass suppression, tree invasion, etc.). Permanent infrastructure with a lifespan of 30+ years will be installed to conduct conservation grazing plans written to benefit wildlife.
- 5) Research has shown that invasive trees are detrimental to prairie/grassland wildlife and thus will be removed with this proposal. These trees reduce nesting success and provide perches and dens for predators. These predators are highly effective at predating both nests and nesting birds, especially in fragmented low quality habitat.

By creating the best possible habitat on WPAs, NWRs and WMAs, we will strive to help our public land management entities by reducing future investments for management.

A RFP and ranking process has been developed in previous phases that allows us to identify, rank and deliver the projects that have the most impact for grassland and wetland wildlife.

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?

This project directly addresses the loss of quality habitat on reconstructed and native prairies through restoration and enhancement best practices. By increasing the quality of existing remnant and reconstructed prairie habitat

we benefit numerous species that are of special concern, threatened, or endangered. This proposal targets grassland species, including but not limited to, greater prairie chickens, ring-necked pheasants, monarch butterflies, honey bees and dakota skippers.

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

Grasslands naturally degrade over time. The longer grasslands are allowed to degrade the more expensive and difficult they are to correct. This project aims to enhance public lands to produce at maximum capacity for the benefit of the public and as such is worthy and necessary for public money.

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:

The science and strategy of habitat enhancement in this part of Minnesota is to build functional complexes of habitat where it once existed. The quantity and spatial arrangement of habitat is important; each project that falls into a conservation plan corridor or complex receives a higher score on the attached scoring sheet. Another important aspect relates to the quality of habitat found there. By enhancing and restoring grasslands and wetlands in key landscapes, we aim to make every acre as productive as possible to provide the most benefit to wildlife and the people of Minnesota. To maximize efficiency and effectiveness, projects will be developed in conjunction with MNDNR and USFWS land managers.

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

- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which two other plans are addressed in this proposal?

- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

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

Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan (MPCP) - This proposal fulfills many goals of the MPCP. It increases the rate of restoration and enhancement on public lands that directly contributes to the goals of public land enhancement in cores, corridors, and agriculture matrix.

Long Range Plan For the Ring-necked Pheasant in MN -This proposal increases the productivity of WMAs, WPAs, and NWRs open to hunting which will contribute to achieving an average ring-necked pheasant harvest of 750,000 birds by 2025.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, enhance, and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

Metro / Urban

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Prairie

- Restore or enhance habitat on public lands

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 proposal significantly increases the quality of habitat for game birds and other wildlife on public lands in the prairie, forest/prairie transition, and metro regions. These efforts provide increased opportunities for the public and improve the quality of the experience on our public lands for all users.

What other fund may contribute to this proposal?

- N/A

Does this proposal include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

\$200,000 is expected in leverage from multiple sources including but not limited to federal sources, contractor donations and PF.

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 proposal supplements past investments and is aimed at accelerating the existing enhancement and restoration of strategic public lands.

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2015-2021	NAWCA	\$450,000 HE

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

The portions of enhancement work that will be completed by this proposal will generally allow the unit to be managed more effectively by the resource manager, whether that be the USFWS or the MNDNR. However, with limited funds and constant pressure to our public land grasslands/wetlands from volunteer invasive trees, water quality decline, aging grasslands, etc., we also expect continued opportunity to supplement local agency efforts. While it's difficult for a third party like us to provide an analysis of future costs on existing public land, according to the Long-Range Budget Analysis of Land Management Needs, the cost of long-term management ranges from \$11-16/acre annually. We expect that average need to be the same for the parcels we worked on.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Project Completion - WMA	MN DNR - Game and Fish Funds	Monitoring	Maintenance	-

Post Project Completion - WPA	USFWS - Federal	Monitoring	Maintenance	-
Post Project Completion -NWR	USFWS-Federal	Monitoring	Maintenance	-

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

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

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

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

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

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

The goals of this program are specifically designed to improve wildlife habitat and public spaces for the benefit of all people regardless of race. Additionally, Pheasants Forever is undertaking an organization wide initiative to design, develop and implement a foundational plan to increase the inclusion of BIPOC communities inside and outside of our organization, and to ensure there's a sense of belonging among all people within Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever.

Activity Details

Requirements

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

Yes

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?

Yes

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- WMA
- WPA
- Refuge Lands

Land Use

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

No

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?
2021	\$1,951,000	\$2,481	\$125,000	-	4,950	-	No
2020	\$2,280,000	\$985,853	\$67,700	-	6,289	4,231	No
2018	\$2,160,000	\$1,885,729	\$43,400	\$44,469	6,500	10,537	No
2015	\$1,120,000	\$1,057,200	-	\$156,000	7,845	8,227	Yes
2012	\$1,320,000	\$1,308,000	-	\$700	18,500	21,553	Yes

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Distribute Project Request for Proposals to Area Land Managers	Fall 2023
Review Project RFPs with project selection committee	Winter 2023-24
Select Projects for completion and hire contractors to complete habitat work	Winter 2023-24
Enhancement / Restoration work begins	Spring 2024
Re-evaluate project status/budget and solicit additional projects as needed	Winter 2024
Enhancement / Restoration work completed	Summer 2028

Budget**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000
Contracts	\$4,000,000	\$200,000	Federal, Private, PF	\$4,200,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$30,000	-	-	\$30,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$108,300	\$63,000	PF	\$171,300
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$4,438,300	\$263,000	-	\$4,701,300

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF Field Staff	0.77	3.0	\$150,000	-	-	\$150,000
State Coordinator - MN	0.03	3.0	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
PF Grants Staff	0.26	3.0	\$100,000	-	-	\$100,000

Amount of Request: \$4,438,300**Amount of Leverage:** \$263,000**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 5.93%**DSS + Personnel:** \$408,300**As a % of the total request:** 9.2%**Easement Stewardship:** -**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** -**Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:**

Leverage is expected from multiple sources including, but not limited to, federal sources, land value donations, contractor donations and PF. Not every source is 100% confirmed at this point. However, PF has an exemplary track record of delivery and over-achievement of match commitments that further stretch OHF funding.

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?

If this project is reduced by 30% we would scale down all acres/activities and dollar amounts proportionately.

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

Personnel and DSS will be scaled down proportionately.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

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

If this project is reduced by 50% we would scale down all acres/activities and dollar amounts proportionately.

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

Personnel and DSS will be scaled down proportionately.

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?

In general PF staffing is existing and only partially funded by OHF and specifically this request. Billing to any appropriation would only be for time spent on direct and necessary costs incurred as outlined in an Accomplishment Plan.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

We anticipate that all of the contract funding will be used for restoration and enhancement activities.

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
n/a

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?

PF utilizes the Total Modified Direct Cost method. This methodology is annually approved by the U.S. Department

of Interior's National Business Center as the basis for the organization's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement. PF's allowable direct support services cost is 3.97%. In this proposal, PF has discounted its rate to 2.5% of the sum of personnel, contracts, and travel. We are donating the difference in-kind.

Federal Funds

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

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

No

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds?

07/01/2025

Output Tables**Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	55	165	0	0	220
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	0	0	0	0
Enhance	55	10,725	0	0	10,780
Total	110	10,890	0	0	11,000

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	\$165,000	\$82,500	-	-	\$247,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$55,000	\$4,135,800	-	-	\$4,190,800
Total	\$220,000	\$4,218,300	-	-	\$4,438,300

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	27	39	0	154	0	220
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	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	275	1,540	0	8,965	0	10,780
Total	302	1,579	0	9,119	0	11,000

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	\$33,000	\$46,200	-	\$168,300	-	\$247,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$117,800	\$659,800	-	\$3,413,200	-	\$4,190,800
Total	\$150,800	\$706,000	-	\$3,581,500	-	\$4,438,300

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	\$3,000	\$500	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$1,000	\$385	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	\$1,222	\$1,184	-	\$1,092	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$428	\$428	-	\$380	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Increased waterfowl and upland bird migratory and breeding success ~ *Outcomes will be measured by resource professionals and evaluated by using the best science available to land managers.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Other ~ *Outcomes will be measured by resource professionals and evaluated by using the best science available to land managers.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Improved condition of habitat on public lands ~ *Outcomes will be measured by resource professionals and evaluated by using the best science available to land managers.*

Parcels

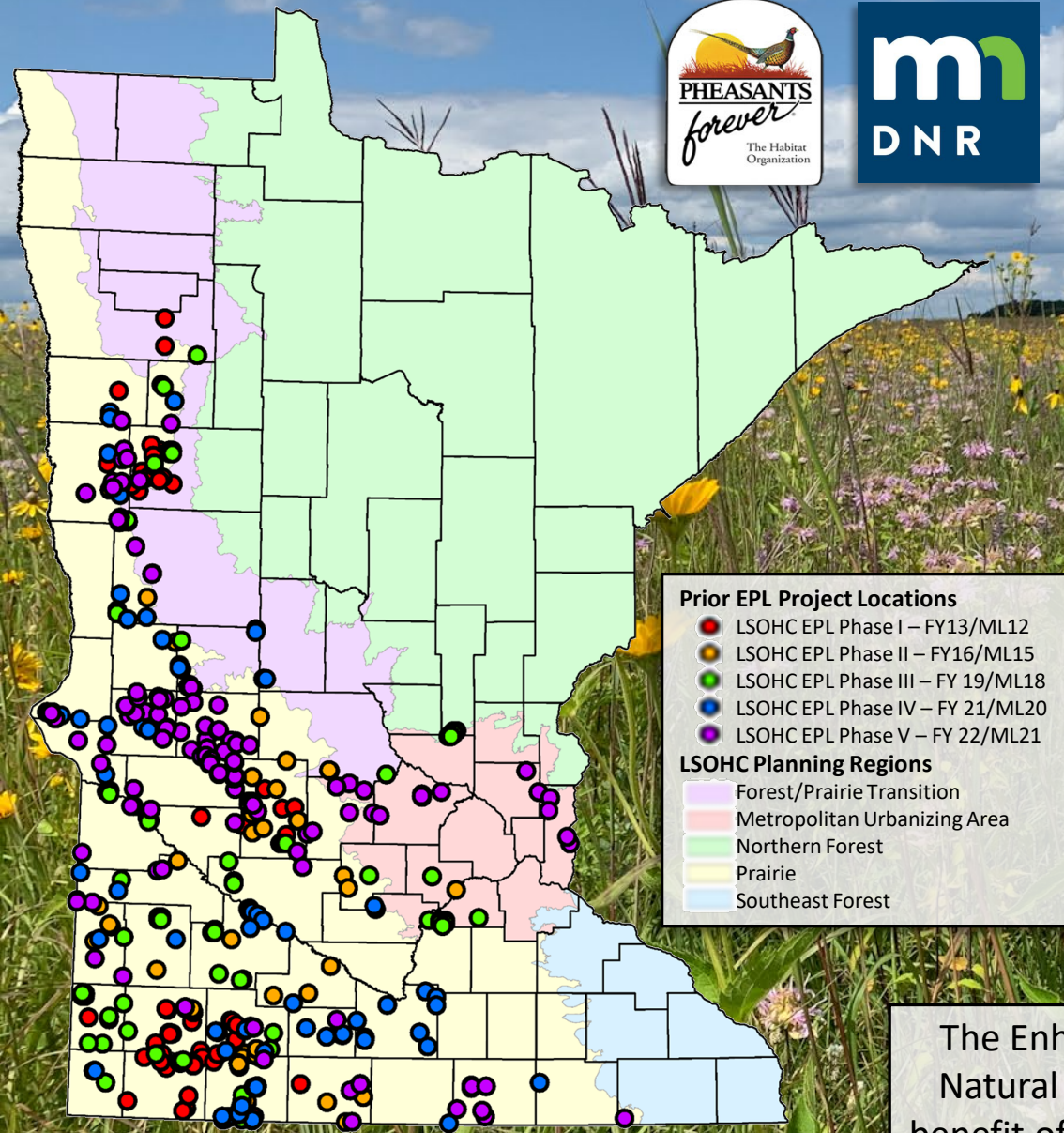
Sign-up Criteria?

Yes

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

Requests for proposals will be sent to MN public land managers and PF chapters within the prairie, prairie/forest transition, and metro regions. Submitted projects will be reviewed for eligibility, scored on attached scoring sheet and ranked by a committee that will consist of staff from USFWS, MN DNR, and PF. Projects will be funded based on feasibility, score, and funds available. Proposals will be accepted until all funds have been spent.

Enhanced Public Lands Grasslands: Phase VI



Prior EPL Project Locations

- LSOHC EPL Phase I – FY13/ML12
- LSOHC EPL Phase II – FY16/ML15
- LSOHC EPL Phase III – FY 19/ML18
- LSOHC EPL Phase IV – FY 21/ML20
- LSOHC EPL Phase V – FY 22/ML21

LSOHC Planning Regions

- Forest/Prairie Transition
- Metropolitan Urbanizing Area
- Northern Forest
- Prairie
- Southeast Forest

Map shows all projects on public lands in phases one through five of the Enhanced Public Lands: Grasslands Program.

The Enhanced Public Lands Grasslands program partners with the MN Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to enhance public lands for the benefit of grassland dependent species in the prairie, prairie/forest transition, and metro regions. Activities include tree removal, prescribed fire, wetland restoration, diversity seeding, and conservation grazing

Kruger WPA Wetland Restoration

EPL Phase III – FY19/ML18

Restoration of eight wetlands were completed in 2021 on the Kruger WPA in Becker county. Sediment was removed from the pictured wetland to restore function and provide habitat for a diversity of species. Work was performed by hiring a local, private contractor using a competitive bid process.



During



After



DRAFT-Enhanced Public Grasslands Phase VI Scoring Sheet-DRAFT

Updated 5/25/2022

WMA/WPA/NWR Project Name	County	Township/Range/Section	Date:

Project Type- Select all that apply

☐ Tree Removal ☐ Prescribed Fire ☐ Diversity Seeding ☐ Conservation Grazing ☐ Wetland Restoration

Must meet all these requirements to be eligible

- 1 ☐ Project is located in an eligible priority region (Prairie, Forest/Prairie Transition, Metro)
- 2 ☐ Project will occur on existing WMA, NWR, or WPA
- 3 ☐ Project is approved by appropriate public land manager
- 4 ☐ Project is open to public hunting
- 5 ☐ Without these funds, project would not be completed
- 6 ☐ Project can be completed by private contractor

Are you Eligible**NO**

Factors		Possible Points	Score
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Will project affect increase wildlife productivity of upland and wetland habitat	5 pts	0
2	<input type="checkbox"/> Will project benefit any T&E or SGCN species?	10 pts	0
3	How large is existing contiguous public lands habitat complex? <input type="checkbox"/> >240 acres <input type="checkbox"/> 81 - 240 acres <input type="checkbox"/> < 80 acres	25 pts 15 pts 5 pts	0
4	<input type="checkbox"/> Will project help reduce future management costs?	10 pts	0
6	Vegetative Diversity (existing or to be planted) <input type="checkbox"/> >20 native species exist or planted <input type="checkbox"/> 11-19 native species exist or planted <input type="checkbox"/> <10 native species exist or planted	15 pts 10 pts 0 pts	0
7	Other Factors <input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Conservation Plan core area <input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Conservation Plan corridor or complex area <input type="checkbox"/> Pheasant Plan Complex <input type="checkbox"/> Site contains native prairie	15 pts 10 pts 15 pts 10 pts	0
TOTAL			0