



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) M.L. 2014 Work Plan

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**Date of Report:** March 24, 2016  
**Date of Next Status Update Report:** July 1, 2016  
**Date of Work Plan Approval:** June 4, 2014  
**Project Completion Date:** June 30, 2017  
**Does this submission include an amendment request?** Yes

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**PROJECT TITLE:** Martin County Park and Natural Area Acquisition

**Project Manager:** Rich Perrine  
**Organization:** Fox Lake Conservation League, Inc.  
**Mailing Address:** Box 212  
**City/State/Zip Code:** Sherburn, MN 56171  
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**Web Address:** foxlakeconservation.com

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**Location:** Martin

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**Total ENRTF Project Budget:**

<b>ENRTF Appropriation:</b>	<b>\$435,000</b>
<b>Amount Spent:</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Balance:</b>	<b>\$435,000</b>

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**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2014, Chp. 226, Sec. 2, Subd. 07e

**Appropriation Language:**

\$435,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Fox Lake Conservation League, Inc. and Martin County to acquire approximately 40 acres in Martin County, including a ten-acre prairie remnant to be owned and managed by Martin County as part of its park system. A vegetation management plan must be developed and implemented and public access must be provided to the native prairie remnant. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2017, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

## **I. PROJECT TITLE: Martin County Park and Natural Area Acquisition**

**II. PROJECT STATEMENT:** This project will protect the only *Lespedeza leptostrachya* (Prairie Bush Clover) population that has been identified in Martin County. The Doyle VanderWert prairie remnant also holds the most diverse riparian, mesic and dry hillside prairie habitat remaining in the county. The site is vulnerable to conversion to other uses and non-native species are starting to encroach into the remnant from the edges. Doyle will donate the 3.7 acres enrolled in the CREP which is planted entirely with seed collected from his prairie remnant. He is finally willing to part with a total of 40 acres to make this project feasible. This project is needed now!

Acquisition of the 10 acre prairie remnant as a county natural area will protect it from land use change. Proper management of the remnant and establishing a native buffer around it will help to maintain its native plant diversity. Water quality improvement is a goal to be achieved by planting some of the steepest highly erodible cropland along both sides of a 1/3 mile meandering stream segment to native vegetation, providing a buffer. Downstream of the project site, the land levels off and this unnamed tributary flows into Cedar Lake within ¼ mile.

Making the site available to the public will provide recreation and educational opportunities. The site is within approximately 2 miles of a public school which will allow it to be utilized for field trips.

## **III. PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:**

### **Project Status as of January 1, 2015:**

The landowner has been contacted and advised to work with his tax advisor to help him determine when and how the payment should be made so it will work for him.

### **Project Status as of July 1, 2015:**

We are preparing for the required property appraisal.

**Project Status as of January 1, 2016:** The appraisal has been completed and we are working with the landowner and his tax advisor to determine whether or not we can develop a purchase agreement that will meet their needs. We have been working with the MN DNR to be sure our proposed acquisition procedures will be acceptable.

### **Amendment Request, March 24, 2016:**

In early 2013, the landowner was asked how much he would need to sell the 40 acre parcel to the county to be used as a natural area within the county park system. Cropland in Cedar Township, where the parcel is located, had just sold for \$12,000 an acre. He said although the hills are steep, the soil is heavy and produces good crops. We asked him to donate the land that was enrolled in CREP. If we purchased the 36.3 acres of cropland and prairie for \$11,020 per acre and the landowner donated the 3.7 acres enrolled in CREP, the total was about \$400,026. He decided \$400,000 would work for him, so project partners put together a proposal asking for \$400,000 in grant funds to make the purchase.

### **Amendments needed:**

1. Extend the project expiration date 1 year to June 30, 2018 with a purchase agreement being completed in 2016. The purchase agreement will specify that timed payments will be made over three years to make it work for the landowner as requested by his tax advisor. Payments would be made in December 2016, January 2017 and January 2018.

2. Allow payment to be based on 110% of the appraised value (appraised at \$280,000) (110% = \$308,000). Doyle has agreed to reduce his asking price by 23%. We believe we are in good faith asking for an increase of 10% over the appraised value. Due to the uniqueness of the site and development pressures, project partners feel this site

is worth protecting. Without the additional 10%, the diverse remnant habitat on these wind swept prairie hilltops is expected to be replaced by wind generation towers.

**Project Status as of July 1, 2016:**

**Project Status as of January 1, 2017:**

**Project Status as of July 1, 2017:**

**Project Status as of January 1, 2018:**

**Overall Project Outcomes and Results:**

#### **IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:**

##### **ACTIVITY 1: Acquisition of 10 acre prairie remnant and 30 acre buffer area**

**Description:** The Fox Lake Conservation League (FLCL) with assistance from Martin SWCD will work with the current landowner to develop a purchase agreement that will work for the landowner as well as the project partners. Once that is achieved, the FLCL and project partners will complete the title work, the property boundary survey and finalize the purchase. After the purchase has been accomplished, the property will be transferred to Martin County, to be managed under the County Park System.

##### **Summary Budget Information for Activity 1:**

**ENRTF Budget:** ~~\$ 405,500~~  
\$285,010  
**Amount Spent:** \$ 0  
**Balance:** ~~\$ 405,500~~  
\$285,010

**Activity Completion Date:** ~~June 1, 2016~~ January 31, 2018

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>1. Purchase the property - payment to the landowner</b>	<del>March 1, 2016</del> <u>January 31, 2018</u>	<del>\$ 400,000</del> <u>\$279,510</u>
<b>2. Acquisition expenses: title work, survey, legal fees, recording fees</b>	<del>June 1, 2016</del> <u>January 31, 2018</u>	\$ 5,500

**Activity Status as of January 1, 2015:**

Work has not started on this activity.

**Activity Status as of July 1, 2015:**

Work has not started on this activity

**Activity Status as of January 1, 2016:**

The development of a purchase agreement has begun.

**Activity Status as of July 1, 2016:**

**Activity Status as of January 1, 2017:**

**Activity Status as of July 1, 2017:**

**Activity Status as of January 1, 2018:**

**Final Report Summary:**

## **ACTIVITY 2: Vegetation Management**

**Description:** The FLCL will work with Martin SWCD and the County Park Board to develop a vegetation management plan for the entire 40 acre parcel. The plan will include the protection and maintenance of the existing prairie remnant. It will incorporate integrated pest management strategies to reduce and eliminate invasive species threats to the remnant and the surrounding buffer area, while minimizing impacts to the environment. The plan will include a timeline for expanding the buffer around the remnant using plant materials originating from the remnant and other remnants located within a few miles of the site.

Initial project work will include invasive species removal from the edges of the prairie remnant and scattered treatments within the remnant. The use of chemicals will be minimized to the extent possible. Chemicals labeled for use near water will be selected and application will be timed to minimize impacts to native species while maximizing effectiveness on target species. As invasive species are removed from the remnant, seed and propagated plants originating from the remnant will be used to replace them. As the edges of the remnant are treated and planted, adjacent areas will be seeded with the remnant providing the source of most of the seed. The balance of the plant materials will come from nearby native plant populations.

The FLCL and Trimont Conservation Club intend to provide the cash and primarily in-kind match to accomplish most of the vegetation management activity which is estimated at approximately \$25,000. Only the initial phases of the plan will be implemented as a part of this project. Future work on expanding the buffer of restored prairie will continue over several years as local source native plant materials become available to plant the additional buffer area.

### **Summary Budget Information for Activity 2:**

**ENRTF Budget: \$ 5,000**

**Amount Spent: \$ 0**

**Balance: \$ 5,000**

### **Activity Completion Date: June 30, 2017**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>2. Remove non-native species/invasive species</b>	June 15, 2017	\$ 2,500
<b>3. Establish local ecotype native species</b>	June 30, 2017	\$ 2,500

### **Activity Status as of January 1, 2015:**

Work has not started on this activity.

### **Activity Status as of July 1, 2015:**

Work has not started on this activity.

### **Activity Status as of January 1, 2016:**

Assessment of the initial phase of removing non-native species has been done and planting materials are being put together for those acres and adjacent cropland acres.

### **Activity Status as of July 1, 2016:**

### **Activity Status as of January 1, 2017:**

### **Activity Status as of July 1, 2017:**

### **Activity Status as of January 1, 2018:**

### **Final Report Summary:**

## **ACTIVITY 3: Develop and begin implementation of a plan for access, trails and management of the park**

**Description:** A plan will be developed for the access, parking area and trail infrastructure within the 40 acre parcel. Matching funds from FLCL (up to \$20,000) will be used to complete the initial installation of the planned

infrastructure. An educational component includes the use of interpretive signage to identify native plant species growing adjacent to the trail. The plan will outline the maintenance needs and the sequence of additional infrastructure work to be completed following the grant period. The vegetation management plan will be a major integral component of this overall park plan.

**Summary Budget Information for Activity 3:**

**ENRTF Budget: \$ 24,500**  
**Amount Spent: \$ 0**  
**Balance: \$ 24,500**

**Activity Completion Date: June 15, 2017**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>1. Install a public access, parking area and an interpretive trail</b>	June 15, 2017	\$ 24,500

**Activity Status as of January 1, 2015:**

Work has not started on this activity.

**Activity Status as of July 1, 2015:**

Work has not started on this activity.

**Activity Status as of: January 1, 2016:**

Preliminary planning for an access, parking area, trail layout and clump plantings with interpretive signage were reviewed and discussed. The infrastructure budget was reviewed and the potential to extend the trail completely around the prairie remnant by including two creek crossings was also discussed.

**Activity Status as of July 1, 2016:**

**Activity Status as of January 1, 2017:**

**Activity Status as of July 1, 2017:**

**Activity Status as of January 1, 2018:**

**Final Report Summary:**

**V. DISSEMINATION:**

**Description:** The Martin County Park Board will provide project leadership at monthly meetings, and report project progress to the County Board and the community. The County Park Brochure will be updated to include the new prairie parcel and acknowledgement of the funding source that provided it. This brochure, which includes a general county map, is provided in public displays throughout the community, in gas stations, restaurants and many other business establishments and offices. The project will also be featured as a new destination on the County Parks section of the Martin County website.

Information on project progress will be reviewed monthly during FLCL regular meetings. The project will be highlighted at the FLCL annual meetings throughout the project period as well as at their fall banquets and other events where they have a presence.

The project will be featured in the Martin SWCD Conservation Update publications twice a year and project progress will be reviewed at monthly SWCD Board meetings. The project will be featured regularly on weekly local conservation radio programs. The project will be tracked on the Fox Lake Conservation League website: [foxlakeconservation.com](http://foxlakeconservation.com) and the Martin SWCD website: [martinswcd.net](http://martinswcd.net)

Martin SWCD currently announces a "First Rite of Spring" celebration with a tour of Pasque Flower sites usually about the first weekend in April. This site will be used to host this event and other events throughout the year to

feature some of the other unique plants like the American Bittersweet that is at its brightest even as the last Fall color is fading out on the prairie.

**Status as of January 1, 2015:**

The project has been featured in the Martin SWCD publication, the "Conservation Update" and the "First Rite of Spring" has been announced. We are shooting for an April 11, 2015 prairie hike, but are requesting an RSVP with contact information in case we need to reschedule.

**Status as of July 1, 2015:**

This project was featured in the Martin SWCD publication, the "Conservation Update" June 2015 edition with a photo of our new District Manager, Ashley Brenke standing with the brilliant red/orange of American bittersweet as the backdrop.

**Status as of January 1, 2016:**

The site was featured for our "First Rite of Spring" field trip on April 11. Twelve people car-pooled to see Pasque flowers in bloom and ground plum plants just starting to emerge. Information and project updates have been presented on weekly radio programs and at SWCD, County Water Plan, County Park Board and FLCL public meetings. The 2016 "First Rite of Spring" has been set for April 9. This date is tentative depending on the timing of Spring emergence.

**Status as of July 1, 2016:**

**Status as of January 1, 2017:**

**Status as of July 1, 2018:**

**Status as of January 1, 2018:**

**Final Report Summary:**

**VI. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:**

**A. ENRTF Budget Overview:**

Budget Category	\$ Amount	Explanation
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:	\$ 24,500	Construction firm or Martin County Highway Department. to install public access and trails.
Equipment/Tools/Supplies:	\$ 5,000	Chemical for weed control, seed, plants
Fee Title Acquisition:	<del>\$ 400,000</del> \$ 279,510	Purchase 40 acres for Martin County (Parks)
Professional Services for Fee Title Acquisition:	\$ 5,500	Legal services, abstractor services, surveyor, recording.
<b>TOTAL ENRTF BUDGET:</b>	<b>\$ 314,510</b>	

**Explanation of Use of Classified Staff:** N/A

**Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$5,000:** N/A

**Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Directly Funded with this ENRTF Appropriation:** N/A

**Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Estimated to Be Funded through Contracts with this ENRTF Appropriation:** N/A

**B. Other Funds:**

Source of Funds	\$ Amount Proposed	\$ Amount Spent	Use of Other Funds
<b>Non-state</b>			
FLCL, Inc. and Trimont Cons Club (Cash Support)	\$ 20,000	\$ 0.0	Infrastructure, restoration activities, mileage, administrative and general office expense support, signage.
FLCL, Inc. and project partners (In-Kind Support)	\$ 20,000	\$ 0.0	Weed control, seed, seed collection, seeding, signage
<b>TOTAL OTHER FUNDS:</b>	<b>\$ 40,000</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>	

**VII. PROJECT STRATEGY:****A. Project Partners:**

Project Partners Not Receiving Funds:

- Martin County Park Board: Providing planning assistance and voluntary assistance with restoration work.
- Martin County West High School Students: Providing voluntary assistance with native seed collection.
- Galena 4-H Club: Providing voluntary assistance with weed control, native seed collection and planting.
- Trimont Conservation Club: Providing voluntary assistance and some funding for restoration work.
- Martin SWCD: Providing assistance with project administration, planning and restoration work.

Project Partners Receiving Funds:

- Martin County Surveyor: \$ 3,500 to provide registered survey of the parcel proposed for acquisition.
- Martin County Attorney: \$ 1,000 to provide legal support for acquisition process.
- Abstract Company TBD by bid process: \$ 1,000 for Title review, update and recording.
- Martin County Highway Department or private contractor – TBD: \$ 24,500 for access and trails.

**B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy:**

This project will protect a diverse population of mesic to dry prairie species and provide a buffer to the native population, expanding the existing habitat over a larger area. The purchase of this parcel will provide the opportunity to protect and expand local ecotype populations of a diverse range of rare to threatened and endangered prairie species. In order to accomplish the goal of protecting this unique and locally endangered habitat, it will take intensive management to eliminate invasive species that are starting to encroach on the parcel from the edges and and to prevent introduction from outside populations. The management plan to be developed as a part of this project, will outline the need for careful diligence in implementing the long term management necessary to protect this parcel for future generations to enjoy.

**C. Spending History:** N/A

**VIII. ACQUISITION/RESTORATION LIST:** See attached Acquisition/Restoration List.

**IX. VISUAL ELEMENT or MAP(S):** See attached maps

**X. ACQUISITION/RESTORATION REQUIREMENTS WORKSHEET:**

**XI. RESEARCH ADDENDUM: N/A**

**XII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

Periodic work plan status update reports will be submitted no later than [January 1, 2015], [July 1, 2015], [January 1, 2016], [July 1, 2016], ~~and~~ [January 1, 2017], [July 1, 2017], [January 1, 2018]. A final report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 15, ~~2017~~ 2018.



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Organization: Fox Lake Conservation League, Inc.													
M.L. 2014 ENRTF Appropriation: \$435,000													
Project Length and Completion Date: 3 Years, June 30, 2017 4 Years, June 30, 2018													
Date of Report: March 24, 2016													

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
M.L. 2014 Acquisition/Restoration List

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#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates Format: [Deg.]° [Min.]' [Sec.]" [Hemis.]		Estimated Cost	Estimated Annual PILT Liabilities	County	Ecological Significance	Activity Description	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles	Type of Landowner	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)	Status
		Latitude	Longitude										
1	Doyle VanderWert	43° 46' 0.458" N	94° 45' 0.119" W	<del>\$405,500</del> \$285,010	N/A	Martin	Native prairie with Federal Threatened, State Endangered Species: Prairie Bush Clover ( <i>Lsepedeza leptostachya</i> )	Fee title acquisition	40	none	private individual	Martin County (Parks)	engaged in landowner negotiations and appraisal process
NOTES:													