

2009 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2012

PROJECT TITLE: Statewide Scientific and Natural Area Acquisition and Restoration (4d)
PROJECT MANAGER: Margaret (Peggy) Booth
AFFILIATION: DNR Division of Ecological & Water Resources
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WEBSITE: [If applicable] www.dnr.state.mn.us/snas
FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2009, Chap. 143, Sec. 2, Subd. 4(d)

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$590,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Acquisition and SNA designation of five properties at three SNAs was completed permanently protecting and providing for public use of 207.32 acres (pro-rated as 106.4 acres with this appropriation). First, a new SNA was established with acquisition of the 14.72-acre **Morton Outcrops SNA** – the heart of a 65-acre exceptional and geologically significant Minnesota River valley rock outcrop site with seven rare species – located in Redwood County. Second, two additions totaling 105.7 acres (pro-rated as 50.3 acres for this appropriation) to the **Hastings Sand Coulee SNA** were acquired; along with a 78-acre adjoining tract transferred from DNR Wildlife, these acquisitions mean that 267 acres is now protected as SNA out of the ~500-acre sand coulee area which is the largest remaining sand prairie complex in Dakota County and is home to 14 rare species including three snakes and two butterflies. Third, two native prairie sites were added to **Blanket Flower Prairie SNA** in Clay County which now protects about 430 acres of habitat for 106 bird species including the greater prairie chicken: a 14-acre addition was acquired with this appropriation; and the 135.9-acre Ole Huseby Homestead addition to Blanket Flower Prairie SNA was acquired in part with this funding (pro-rated as 27.4 acres for this appropriation).

A total of 563 acres at 27 SNAs across the state received restoration and enhancement work, plus development projects were completed at 17 SNAs, thus increasing the native habitat quality and public use of these SNAs. In summary: one 11-acre prairie reconstruction project was completed; woody invasive/non-native species were removed on 202 acres at 11 SNAs and herbaceous or seedling invasive species were removed at another 44 acres at four SNAs; prescribed burning was completed on 317 acres at nine SNAs. New Adaptive Management Plans were completed for two+ sites. Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) was involved in these projects at ten SNAs.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Information about Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) sites, including those SNAs with new acquisition, restoration, enhancement and development activities through this appropriation, is available on the DNR website (www.mndnr.gov/snas). DNR-sponsored volunteer events are regularly posted at: www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteering/sna/index. The Hastings Sand Coulee SNA acquisition was referenced in articles in the *Hastings Gazette* and the Friends of the Mississippi River website.

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2009 Work Program Final Report
Statewide Scientific and Natural Area Acquisition and Restoration (4d)**

Date of Report: December 3, 2012
Final Report

Date of Work program Approval: June 16, 2009
Project Completion Date: June 30, 2011 for Result 2; June, 30 2012 for Result 1.

I. PROJECT TITLE: Statewide Scientific and Natural Area Acquisition and Restoration (4d)

Project Manager: Margaret (Peggy) Booth
Affiliation: DNR Division of Ecological & Water Resources
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Location: statewide (See Figure 1)

Total Trust Fund Project Budget:	Trust Fund Appropriation	\$	590,000
	Minus Amount Spent:	\$	588,969
	Equal Balance:	\$	1,031

Legal Citation:

M.L. 2009, Chap. 143, Sec. 2, Subd. 4(d)

Appropriation Language:

\$590,000 is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire high quality native plant communities and rare features and restore parts of scientific and natural areas as provided in Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 5. A list of proposed acquisitions must be provided as part of the required work program.

II & III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY

Acquisition and SNA designation of five properties at three SNAs was completed permanently protecting and providing for public use of 207.32 acres (pro-rated as 106.4 acres with this appropriation). First, a new SNA was established with acquisition of the 14.72-acre **Morton Outcrops SNA** – the heart of a 65-acre exceptional and geologically significant Minnesota River valley rock outcrop site with seven rare species – located in Redwood County. Second, two additions totaling 105.7 acres (pro-rated as 50.3 acres for this appropriation) to the **Hastings Sand Coulee SNA** were acquired; along with a 78-acre adjoining tract transferred from DNR Wildlife, these acquisitions mean that 267 acres is now protected as SNA out of the ~500-acre sand coulee area which is the largest remaining sand prairie

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complex in Dakota County and is home to 14 rare species including three snakes and two butterflies. Third, two native prairie sites were added to **Blanket Flower Prairie SNA** in Clay County which now protects about 430 acres of habitat for 106 bird species including the greater prairie chicken: a 14-acre addition was acquired with this appropriation; and the 135.9-acre Ole Huseby Homestead addition to Blanket Flower Prairie SNA was acquired in part with this funding (pro-rated as 27.4 acres for this appropriation).

A total of 563 acres at 27 SNAs across the state received restoration and enhancement work, plus development projects were completed at 17 SNAs, thus increasing the native habitat quality and public use of these SNAs. In summary: one 11-acre prairie reconstruction project was completed; woody invasive/non-native species were removed on 202 acres at 11 SNAs and herbaceous or seedling invasive species were removed at another 44 acres at four SNAs; prescribed burning was completed on 317 acres at nine SNAs. New Adaptive Management Plans were completed for two+ sites. Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) was involved in these projects at ten SNAs.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1: SNA Acquisition

Description:

The SNA program will acquire and designate as SNA approximately 280 acres of high quality native habitat in order to protect elements of natural diversity of state importance such as rare and endangered plant and animal species, undisturbed plant communities, and geological features (180 acres using M.L. 2008 appropriation and 100 acres using M.L. 2009 appropriation). The SNA goal is to preserve and perpetuate the ecological diversity of Minnesota's heritage for scientific study, education, and nature observation. Furthermore, SNA acquisition is an important strategy of the State Wildlife Action Plan in protecting key habitats for Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Sites acquired are designated and managed as provided in MN Statute 86A.05 and MN Rules 6136. Presently, 147 SNAs encompassing over 182,000 acres have been designated in Minnesota.

Sites to be acquired under this appropriation have been identified as priorities for protection by the Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS) with Ecological Evaluations approved for SNA acquisition by the Commissioner's Advisory Committee. Land acquired with this appropriation will be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum management standards as determined by the commissioner. All required Trust Fund acquisition reports will be submitted for each acquisition.

Through this funding (M.L. 2008 and M.L. 2009), all or part of about 4-10 sites would be protected at estimated costs of \$2,000 to \$12,000/acre depending on appraised land values in the locations being acquired. These funds would be targeted at sites that will not be protected through other currently available ENRTF and bonding

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funds. Specifically, to date the sites have been identified as conservation priorities for potential acquisition under this grant are listed in Table 1 and shown in Figure 1.

Summary Budget Information for Result 1: Trust Fund Budget: **\$434,649**
Amount Spent: **\$434,649**
Balance: **\$ 0**

Deliverable	Completion Date	Budget	Status
100 acres acquired & designated SNA	November 17, 2011	\$434,649	5 sites (106 acres prorated)

Completion Date: June 30, 2012

Final Report Summary:

The new **Morton Outcrops SNA** was established through acquisition and designation of a 14.72-acre parcel. The 65-acre Morton Outcrops is one of the best remaining examples of a rock outcrop flora in Minnesota with 150 to 200 species of plants and 7 rare plant and animal including the Federally Threatened species prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) and the state-listed Endangered lichen *Buellia nigra*. The Morton Outcrop is the type locality from which the rock type "Morton Gneiss" was first described. Classified as Morton Quartz Monzonite Gneiss, this rock type is one of the oldest known rocks in the world, dating to over 3 billion years before present.

A pair of acquisitions were funded in part through this appropriation to add over 105 acres to the **Hastings Sand Coulee SNA**. First, a 25.64 acre addition was acquired with this appropriation and designated as SNA that features outstanding quality dry sand gravel prairie and rare species including records of the bull snake. This acquisition, done with assistance of Friends of the Mississippi River, permanently protected rare species habitat previously owned by the City of Hastings for storm-water management purposes. Second, this funding contributed towards acquisition of an 80-acre Holst property that also was funded in part in ENRTF 2009 Metro Corridors funding reallocated from Metro Greenways to the SNA Program, \$50,000 from Dakota County, and with SNA prairie bonding (see budget table below summarizing landowner payments). These two parcels are part of the sinuous 500+ acre Hastings Sand Coulee area that is the largest remaining prairie complex in Dakota County and is home to 14 rare species including 3 snakes and 2 butterflies. The 80-acre Holst tract immediately adjoins a 78-acre parcel transferred from DNR Fish and Wildlife Division (Hastings WMA) to DNR Ecological and Water Resources Division that was concurrently added to the Hastings Sand Coulee SNA. The 25.64-acre parcel also immediately adjoins the WMA parcel and is kitty-corner to the Holst property. Having these 3 contiguous parcels added to the SNA has greatly increased the ability of DNR and FMR to ecologically manage these sites for their phenomenal ensemble of rare species and unique plant communities.

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Hastings Sand Coulee SNA - Holst addition			
Total acres acquired as SNA:		80	
Funding Source	Landowner Payment	%	Pro-Rated Acres
Dakota County - FNAP	\$ 50,000.00	10.4%	8.3
Non-State Subtotal	\$ 50,000.00		
Bonding - SNA 2008 Prairie	\$ 61,800.00	12.9%	10.3
ENRTF- SNA MeCC 2009	\$ 220,000.00	45.8%	36.7
ENRTF- SNA 2009	\$ 148,200.00	30.9%	24.7
DNR Subtotal	\$ 430,000.00		
TOTAL	\$ 480,000.00	100.0%	80.0

Two additions were acquired and designated at **Blanket Flower Prairie SNA** (Clay County). A 14-acre parcel was fully acquired with this funding that is part of a high biodiversity area and needed to buffer the adjoining higher quality native prairie to the southwest that is already SNA; DNR ownership of this parcel will increase prairie management effectiveness on the existing SNA. The 135.9-acre Ole Huseby Homestead addition (pro-rated as 27.4 acres for this appropriation) features high quality dry sand-gravel prairie (providing habitat for regal fritillary and Nuttall's ground rose) as well as woodland and lakeshore; this site is one of the few ownerships in this area with high quality prairie that has not sold a wind lease to a wind farm developer. These two parcels added significant acreage to the SNA which harbors 106 bird species including greater prairie chicken.

Blanket Flower SNA – Ole Huseby Homestead addition			
Total acres to be acquired:		135.9	
Funding Source	Landowner Payment	%	Pro-Rated Acres
Bonding - SNA 2008 prairie	\$ 137,880.00	46.3%	62.9
ENRTF- SNA 2009	\$ 60,000.00	20.1%	27.4
ENRTF- SNA 2010	\$ 100,000.00	33.6%	45.6
DNR Subtotal	\$ 297,880.00		
TOTAL	\$ 297,880.00	100.0%	135.9

Several other projects were initiated under this appropriation, but were subsequently halted for various reasons. These projects include the following; a) a proposed 240-acre new SNA called **Dinner Creek** in Hubbard County was determined to have no legal access, landowner was asked to obtain legal access, but this did not happen so its acquisition was put on indefinite hold; b) a 17-acre addition to **Cold Spring Heron Colony SNA** (Stearns County) was put on hold after determining that the landowner had an unacceptable deed; c) an 10-acre addition to the new **Boltuck-Rice Forever Wild SNA** was postponed at the landowners request; d) the proposed

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new 52-acre **Rushford Bluffs SNA** was delayed because of landowner deed issues; and e) a proposed 62-acre addition to **Iron Springs Bog SNA** (Clearwater County) was optioned with the landowner, but the county board declined to approve the acquisition because of no-net-loss of private land concerns, so the project was halted.

Result 2: Restoration and Development of SNAs

Description:

Restoration, enhancement, and development activities on about 600 acres at approximately 25 Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) statewide will improve the health and sustainability of native biodiversity of native prairie, savanna, old growth forest, and other native plant communities. This work will directly contribute towards achievement of restoration of degraded and rare land features (particularly native prairie, savanna, and forest) needed to support Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and thereby helps achieve Habitat Recommendation 5 of the SCPP.

Activities for restoration, development, and native habitat enhancement purposes and to bring sites acquired up to minimum standards will be carried out by SNA program or other Department crews, Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC), Sentence to Service personnel, volunteers, and/or contractors on SNAs across the state (outside of the Metro Conservation Corridors partnership mapped corridors). This includes activities, such as seed collection, site preparation, planting, establishment period maintenance, removal and treatment of exotics, control of woody encroachment, site clean-up, signing, deer exclosures and other fencing, prescribed burns, and updating of management plans or completion of new adaptive management plans for targeted sites. Results will be reported for all non-duplicated acres with activities accomplished through these funds (e.g. acres of exotics removed or treated, miles of burn breaks installed or acres of prescribed burns, acres of seed harvest, acres planted, etc). All restoration will use seeds or plants of a local ecotype, collected whenever possible from onsite or within 25 miles.

All SNAs are candidates for restoration, enhancement, and development work, with the highest priority sites (not including sites with prairie work targeted through other funding) are listed in Table 2 and highlighted in Figure 1.

**Summary Budget Information for Result 1: Trust Fund Budget: \$155,351
Amount Spent: \$154,320
Balance: \$ 1,031**

Deliverable	Completion Date	Budget	Status
1. ~30 acres restoration/reconstruction	June 30, 2011	\$25,000	11 acres completed
2. ~140 acres invasive species control & woody encroachment removal	June 30, 2011	\$48,000	246 acres treated
3. ~430 acres prescribed burning	June 30, 2011	\$50,000	317 acres burned

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4. site development at ~ 10 SNAs	June 30, 2011	\$13,000	projects completed at 15 sites
5. ~ 5 management plan (updates or new)	March 1, 2011	\$24,000	2+ new mgmt plan completed

Completion Date: June 30, 2011

Final Report Summary: A total of 563 acres at 27 SNAs across the state received restoration and enhancement work, plus development projects were completed at 17 SNAs. In summary: one 11-acre prairie reconstruction project was completed at Zumbro Falls Woods SNA, including collection of seed on site, mechanical seeding, and follow-up prescribed burning; woody invasive/non-native species were removed on 202 acres at 11 SNAs and herbaceous or seedling invasive species were removed at another 44 acres at four SNAs; 11 miles of burn breaks were installed at nine SNAs and prescribed burning was completed on 317 acres at nine SNAs. New Adaptive Management Plans (natural resource management plans using new approach and format developed by the SNA Program) were completed for three sites (two paid predominantly with this funding) and prescribed burn plans were completed and approved for 14 sites. Development projects included installation of signs, gates, and culverts, improvements to enclosure and boundary fencing, parking lot construction, trail repair, and site cleanup. Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) was involved in these projects at ten SNAs. See Table 2 for details.

V. TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET:

Personnel: \$111,245 (for classified and unclassified SNA program & other DNR staff paid almost exclusively with special project funds: ~ 0.1 FTE acquisition specialist; up to ~0.1 FTE management plan writer & contract coordinator – new position; up to ~ 0.5 FTE specialists and technicians; and ~ 0.6 FTE laborers and seasonal crews).

Contracts: \$29,978 (MCC and contractors selected through bid process as needed to complete restoration and development projects).

Equipment/Tools/Supplies: \$10,052 (truck & equipment fleet charges & incidental parts; materials and supplies, such as fencing, signs, gloves, PPE, chemical, etc.)

Acquisition, including easements: \$424,582 (towards fee acquisition of about 100 acres to be owned by DNR & designated SNA; including related real estate transaction costs)

Travel: \$1,299 (instate travel as needed by land acquisition specialists evaluating site & negotiating with landowners & as needed by project staff for restoration & development work.)

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Other: \$2,957 (for DNR professional services needed to complete a restoration/enhancement project)

TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET: \$590,000

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$3,500: NA

VI. OTHER FUNDS & PARTNERS / PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners:

SNA developed and implemented its projects in cooperation with Friends of the Mississippi River, Dakota County and other partners.

B. Other Funds Proposed to be Spent during the Project Period:

These Environmental Trust fund appropriations were supplemented by other state funding (e.g. bonding and potentially other LCCMR recommended funding) and non-state funds (e.g. federal SWG, private funds, and partial landowner donations) as needed to complete priority acquisitions and restoration and development projects. Funding sources used for acquisition projects done through these appropriations and pro-rated acreages are reported above.

C. Spending History:

SNA acquisition, restoration and development project appropriations received in CY 2005-2008 (not counting those targeted exclusively to Metro Corridors, HCP, or private prairie stewardship): 2005 SNA Statewide \$134K; 2008 SNA Statewide \$1M; Accelerated Prairie (Results 4 & 6 only) \$775K. FY06-08 Bonding appropriations: 2006 SNA \$2M; 2008 SNA \$1M; 2008 Native Prairie \$4M. Federal funds spent as of 4/1/09 in FY06-09: State Wildlife Grants \$94K. Other funds spent: partner contributions & landowner donations. The SNA program general fund includes approximately \$400,000 annually for statewide operations and crew.

D. Time: July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2012.

E. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy:

This project will help protect and perpetuate rare species, SGCNs, and natural features of state significance at approximately 25-35 SNA sites across the state selected because of their importance and strategic value in protecting these rare resources. As a part of the State Outdoor Recreation system, all of these sites are managed as state SNAs that provide public access and opportunities to the public for nature observation and study.

The SNA Long Range Plan has a goal of protection through SNA designation within each ecological subsection of five occurrences of each native plant community (NPC) and three occurrences of each natural heritage element found in that subsection. The Division of Ecological Resources is in the process of using the recently revised Native Plant Community Classification system to assess the extent of protection for each NPC per subsection – looking at both numbers of occurrences (NPC polygons) and acreage protected. This demonstrates a substantial need for

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more SNA land acquisition and native habitat restoration/development for at least the next 2 decades. Towards this end, the Division could readily utilize support from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust fund and/or the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council of \$2M to \$8M per biennium over this timeframe.

VII. DISSEMINATION: Site tours have been held for various groups at each acquired site during which funding approved by LCCMR was acknowledged

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic work program progress reports will be submitted not later than March 1st and September 1st of each year. A final work program report and associated products for the 2008 appropriation will be submitted no later than August 1, 2010 as requested by the LCCMR and a final work program report and associated products for the 2009 appropriation will be submitted no later than August 1, 2012.

IX. RESEARCH PROJECTS: NA

Attachment A: FINAL Budget Detail for 2009 Project								
Project Title: Statewide Scientific & Natural Area Acquisition and Restoration								
Project Manager Name: Margaret (Peggy) Booth								
Trust Fund Appropriation: \$ 590,000								
2009 Trust Fund Budget	<u>Result 1 Budget:</u>	Amount Spent (12/1/11)	Balance (12/1/11)	<u>Result 2 Budget:</u>	Amount Spent (6/30/11)	Balance (6/30/11)	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
	Acquisition & Designation			Restoration & Development				
BUDGET ITEM								
PERSONNEL: wages and benefits for classified and unclassified SNA program & other DNR staff paid almost exclusively with special project funds: ~ 0.1 FTE acquisition specialist; up to ~0.1 FTE management plan writer & contract coordinator – new position; up to ~ 0.5 FTE specialists and technicians; and ~ 0.6 FTE laborers and seasonal crews	10,067	10,067	-	101,178	100,147	1,031	111,245	1,031
Contracts (
Other contracts: MCC and contractors selected through bid process as needed to complete restoration and development projects	-	-	-	29,978	29,978	-	29,978	-
Non-capital Equipment / Tools: truck & equipment fleet charges & incidental parts	-	-	-	10,052	10,052	-	10,052	-
Land acquisition	390,000	390,000	-			-	390,000	-
Professional Services	34,582	34,582	-	2,957	2,957	-	37,539	-
Supplies: restoration & development materials and supplies, such as fencing, signs, gloves, PPE, chemical, etc.			-	9,887	9,887	-	9,887	-
Travel expenses in Minnesota	-	-	-	1,299	1,299	-	1,299	-
COLUMN TOTAL	434,649	434,649	-	155,351	154,320	1,031	590,000	1,031

Table 2. Potential SNA -STATEWIDE - Restoration & Development Activities - FY10-11
FINAL
updated September 13, 2011

SNA Name	County	Updated or New Management Plan	Acres Completed (bold X if other)					Comments & Accomplishments Not Measured in Acres
			Native Plant Community Reconstruction	Woody Encroachment-Invasives Removal	Prescribed Burning	Non-Woody or Seeding Invasives Control	Development	
DNR REGION 1 (NORTHWEST)								
Felton Prairie				5				
Lester Lake	Hubbard	X					X	partial funding towards sign and parking area installation & mgmt plan
Pembina Trail	Polk	X					X	culverts and repair approach/gates; mgmt plan completed for Foxboro unit
Prairie Smoke Dunes	Norman		X	1	X		X	2 culverts and gate installed; 1.1 miles of burn break; building removal-site clean up in preparation for future 1.1 ac restoration project
Santee Prairie	Mahnomen						X	gate installed
Two Rivers Aspen Parkland	Roseau				X			1.24 miles burn break; rxburn plan developed; conditions too wet to conduct burn
DNR REGION 2 (NORTHEAST)								
Chisholm Point Island	Itasca						2	X .35 miles of enclosure repair - work by CCM
Hemlock Ravine	Carlton							X .22 miles of enclosure reinforcement
Lost 40		X						new natural resource management plan completed
Moose Mountain	St. Louis							X boundary brushing
Myhr Creek Ridge	Cook							X parking lot constructed
Sugarloaf Point	Cook						2	work by CCM
DNR REGION 3 (CENTRAL)								
Boot Lake	Anoka							X .08 miles boundary fencing completed
Falls Creek	Washington							X site cleanup - 1 dump completed
Franconia Bluffs	Washington			1				X 2975 ft of boundary signing completed & site cleanup initiated
Harry Cater					3			
N. Fork Zumbro Woods	Goodhue							X signing completed
Oronoco Prairie	Olmsted				X			0.42 miles burn break; not burned due to other priorities
Quarry Park	Stearns				X			1.22 miles burn break; not burned - conditions too wet then too green
Seminary Fen	Carver							X site cleanup completed
Spring Creek Prairie				1				
St. Croix Savanna	Washington				37			X site cleanup completed; 1.62 miles burn break
Uncas Dunes	Sherburne			X	77			assisted contractor with woody (timber) removal
Wolsfeld Woods	Hennepin					24		X trail repair completed
Wood-Rill	Hennepin					16		X .64 miles trail repair completed
Zumbro Falls Woods	Wabasha		11	X	11			biomass project completed; 1.14 miles burn break; RxB part of reconstruction aftercare (same acres)
DNR REGION 4 (SOUTH)								
Blue Devil Valley	Yellow Medicine			1				work by CCM
Butternut Valley Prairie	Blue Earth			12				X signs installed
Des Moines River Prairie	Jackson				18			1.14 miles burn break; work by CCM
Holthe Prairie	Jackson			95				
Iron Horse Prairie				8	21			incl work by CCM
Lundblad Prairie	Murray				46			.83 miles burn break; incl. work by CCM
Mound Spring Prairie					X			2.29 miles burn break; not burned due to logistics issues
Prairie Coteau	Pipestone				71			incl. work by CCM
Racine Prairie	Mower			4				work by CCM
Rock Ridge	Cottonwood				33			work by CCM
Swede's Forest	Yellow Medicine-Redwood			4				
Wild Indigo Prairie	Mower			70				work by CCM
TOTAL acres			11	202	317	44		

