2009 Project Abstract
For the Period Ending June 30, 2011

PROJECT TITLE: 2K:Prairie Management - MN DNR - Scientific and Natural Areas Program, part of the Overall Habitat Conservation Partnership
PROJECT MANAGER: Jason Garms
AFFILIATION: MN DNR – Ecological and Water Resources
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WEBSITE: www.dnr.state.mn.us
FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
LEGAL CITATION: ML 2009, Chapter 143, Section 2, Subd. 4(e)

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: $75,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

A total of 536 acres of native and reconstructed prairie (largely native) were prescribed burned. This includes 318 acres on Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) and 218 acres on perpetual Native Prairie Bank (NPB) easements. Due to a lack of qualified prescribed burn vendors, most burns were implemented by agency crews. Invasive species control treatments were completed on a total of 113 acres, including 48 acres on SNAs and 65 acres on NPB lands. Invasive species treated include buckthorn, siberian elm, red cedar, knapweed, leafy spurge, and cow-vetch. Due to the availability of qualified contractors, many woody invasive species projects were contracted. One reconstruction project totaling 30 acres was completed on the Zilmer WMA, which part of the larger Felton Prairie Complex. Seed for the reconstruction was collected from surrounding lands. In total, 679 acres of prairie habitat was improved during this project.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Ecological and Water Resources invests considerable time in publishing and distributing results in a variety of formats for various audiences. SNA Program staff make presentations that describe prairie management methodologies and results to a wide range of audiences including county boards, local planning groups, land managers, citizen and technical advisory groups, and at professional meetings.

Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund 2009 Work Program Final Report

Date of Report: August 31, 2011
Final Report
Date of Work Program Approval: June 16, 2009
Project Completion Date: June 30, 2010

I. PROJECT TITLE: 2K – Prairie Management, MN DNR
Minnesota's Habitat Conservation Partnership Phase VI
www.mnhabitatcorridors.org

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Location: Areas of native prairie and associated grasslands on public and private land within Project Areas 1, 3, 6, 9, 10, & 11. See map of Scientific & Natural Areas and Native Prairie Bank easements in the project areas.

Total Trust Fund Project Budget:	**Trust Fund Appropriation**	**$**	**75,000**
	Minus Amount Spent:	**$**	**74,990**
	Equal Balance:	**$**	**10**

Legal Citation: M.L. 2009, Chp. 143, Sec. 2, Subd. 4e(2k)

Appropriation Language:
$3,375,000 is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for the sixth appropriation for acceleration of agency programs and cooperative agreements. Of this appropriation, $770,000 is for the Department of Natural Resources agency programs and $2,605,000 is for agreements as follows: $450,000 with Pheasants Forever; $50,000 with Minnesota Deer Hunters Association; $895,000 with Ducks Unlimited, Inc.; $85,000 with National Wild Turkey Federation; $365,000 with the Nature Conservancy; $210,000 with Minnesota Land Trust; $350,000 with the Trust for Public Land; $100,000 with Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.; $50,000 with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; and $50,000 with Friends of Detroit Lakes Watershed Management District to plan, restore, and acquire fragmented landscape corridors that connect areas of quality habitat to sustain fish, wildlife, and plants. The United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service is a cooperating partner in the appropriation. Expenditures are limited to the project corridor areas as defined in the work program. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum habitat and facility management standards as determined by the commissioner of natural resources. This appropriation may not be used for the purchase of residential structures, unless expressly approved in the work program.

All conservation easements must be perpetual and have a natural resource management plan. Any land acquired in fee title by the commissioner of natural resources with money from this appropriation must be designated as an outdoor recreation unit under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.07. The commissioner may similarly designate any lands acquired in less than fee title. A list of proposed restorations and fee title and easement acquisitions must be provided as part of the required work program. All funding for conservation easements must include a long-term stewardship plan and funding for monitoring and enforcing the agreement. To the maximum extent practical, consistent with contractual easement or fee acquisition obligations, the recipients shall utilize staff resources to identify future projects and shall maximize the implementation of biodiverse, quality restoration projects in the project proposal into the first half of the 2010 fiscal year.

II. and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:

A total of 536 acres of native and reconstructed prairie (largely native) were prescribed burned. This includes 318 acres on Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) and 218 acres on perpetual Native Prairie Bank (NPB) easements. Due to a lack of qualified prescribed burn vendors, most burns were implemented by agency crews. Invasive species control treatments were completed on a total of 113 acres, including 48 acres on SNAs and 65 acres on NPB lands. Invasive species treated include buckthorn, siberian elm, red cedar, knapweed, leafy spurge, and cow-vetch. Due to the availability of qualified contractors, many woody invasive species projects were contracted. One reconstruction project totaling 30 acres was completed on the Zilmer WMA, which part of the larger Felton Prairie Complex. Seed for the reconstruction was collected from surrounding lands. In total, 679 acres of prairie habitat was improved during this project.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1: Prairie Management and Restoration

Description:

The following prairie management and restoration activities will be targeted at Scientific and Natural Areas and Native Prairie Bank conservation easements as shown on the attached map.

Woody encroachment – ($29,000/up to 200 acres of surrounding grassland/prairie benefited). Invasive woody species have invaded a significant number of native prairie tracts over the past 60+ years and is accelerating. Cutting scattered trees, fencerows, or small groves in prairies and grasslands can substantial improve areas of habitat for open grassland flora and fauna. Woody encroachment removal projects will be implemented by private contractors and DNR management crews.

Prescribed burning – ($24,000/up to 250 acres burned). The importance of fire for keeping prairies healthy is widely recognized. However, limited spring and fall burn seasons, and the need for specialized training and equipment, make it challenging to

meet all fire management needs. This activity builds on the success of past LCCMR accelerated prairie burning projects. DNR trained burn crews will implement prescribed fire projects, or certified private contractors when available.

Invasive species control – ($12,000/up to 35 acres treated) Herbaceous invasive species threaten many of the few remaining native prairies, and new invasive species continue to emerge. Species such as Spotted Knapweed, Birdsfoot Trefoil, Leafy Spurge, and Crown Vetch quickly invade grassland, reducing diversity and habitat quality. Funds will be used to implement 'best management practices' for control and elimination of exotic species on remnant prairies and other priority grasslands.

Restoration/reconstruction – ($10,000/up to 15 acres reconstructed) Today prairie remnants and other grasslands existing as fragments. Reconstruction efforts are needed to expand functionality of existing habitat, and buffer native plant communities from surrounding activities. Funds will be used to harvest and process seed, and plant native prairie species. Restoration projects will use only local ecotype seeds and plants.

Summary Budget Information for Result 1:	**Trust Fund Budget:**	**$75,000**
	Amount Spent:	**$74,990**
	Balance:	**$10**

Deliverable	**Completion Date**	**Budget**
1. 200 acres of woody encroachment control	June 30, 2010	$29,000
2. 250 acres prescribed burning	June 30, 2010	$24,000
3. 35 acres of invasive species control	June 30, 2010	$12,000
4. 15 acres of restoration/reconstruction	June 30, 2010	$10,000

Final Report Summary:

Woody encroachment – (58 acres of trees removed, 232 acres of prairie benefited): Buckthorn, Siberian elm, Red cedar were cleared from 58 acres, benefitting and improving 232 acres of prairie habitat. The acres listed above represents both the actual acres physically covered with trees that were removed, and the acres of habitat that are now more functional as prairie habitat. Costs varied greatly between individual projects based on the cutting techniques applied. Hand cutting on slopes can cost 10 times more per acre than projects that could support some mechanical removal. Private contractors remain very interested in this kind of work, bidding remains competitive.

Prescribed burning – (536 acres burned): The spring of 2010 was a good burn season and we were able to surpass our rxburn goals for this project. Weather is a huge variable that can substantially impact a burn season. It remains difficult to find qualified rxburn contractors that perform this kind of work – we continue to rely heavy on DNR crews to complete this work.

Invasive species control – (55 acres treated): Knapweed, Leafy Spurge, and Cow-vetch were treated using control techniques that are target specific and not harmful to surround resources, such as hand pulling and spot spraying individual plants with selective herbicides. Developing contracts for small dispersed invasive populations that emerge quickly have not proven cost effective, although contracts for removal of woody invasive species have been easier to manage and cost effective.

Restoration/reconstruction – (30 acres reconstructed): SNA Program staff members who manage lands within the Felton Prairie Complex did not find that Prairie Bank or SNA lands within the complex had restoration needs, but adjacent lands did. It was decided that the greatest reconstruction need for SNA's in the Felton Complex is to expand the surrounding habitat and buffer the SNA's from row crop land uses. A partnership between the County, DNR-SNA, and DNR-Wildlife yielded a harvest from adjacent County lands and a seeding on the Zilmer WMA. It remains very difficult to find local origin seed on the market.

V. TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET:

Budget Item	
***Personnel:** DNR staff: NR Specialists, NR Technicians, NR laborers	$37,500
Contracts: Competitive bid contracts with private vendors and cost-share grants to landowners for prescribed burning, prairie reconstructions, woody encroachment, etc	$26,500
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: project supplies, vehicle fleet costs (e.g. ATV, Pick-up, ASV tracked vehicle)	$11,000
Acquisition: *none*	$0
Travel: *none*	$0
Other: *none*	$0
TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET:	**$75,000**

***Explanation of Personnel costs:**

- For classified and unclassified SNA program & other DNR staff paid almost exclusively with special project funds: up to ~ 0.4 FTE specialists and technicians; and ~ 0.3 FTE laborers and seasonal crews
- Only time spent on approved projects will be charged to these funds. Without these funds, none of the projects in this work program would be completed. They are an acceleration of related initiatives.
- To implement projects in the work program, specialized skills (prescribed burning, knowledge of sites and management implications) are often required. DNR employees with the training, experience and certifications required to do these specialized tasks are used to directly implement these projects, and work with landowners and contractors to design, direct and certify completion of projects they carry out.
- Contracts with outside vendors are used when possible, but contractors are not available for some projects.

TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET: $ 75,000

Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund 2009 Work Program Final Report

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than $3,500: *none*

VI. PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners: We are part of the Habitat Conservation Partnership Phase V proposal. Please see main proposal for complete partner list.

B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy: Please see main proposal for Habitat Conservation Partnerships impacts and long-term strategy. Project impact and long-term strategy for Prairie Management will be included in the December 1, 2009 Work Program Progress Report.

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

D. Spending HIstory: Past HCP spending; 2001: $36,250 / 2003: $0 / 2005: $133,000 / 2007: $75,000

VII. DISSEMINATION: Accomplishment Reports and press releases will be made available at http://www.mnhabitatcorridors.org

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic progress reports are due December 1, 2009, June 1, 2010, and December 1, 2010 and the final work program report is due between June 30 and August 1, 2011. All reports will be generated using the HCP online reporting system.

IX. RESEARCH PROJECTS: NA

Attachment A: Final Budget Detail for 2009 Projects					
Project Title: 2K – Prairie Management					
Project Manager Name: Jason Garms					
Trust Fund Appropriation: $75,000					
2009 Trust Fund Budget	**Result 1 Budget:**	**Amount Spent**	**Balance**	**TOTAL BUDGET**	**TOTAL BALANCE**
	Prairie Management and restoration				
BUDGET ITEM					
PERSONNEL: wages and benefits DNR NR Specialists, NR Technicians, NR laborers	37,500	37,490	10		10
Contracts					
Professional/technical					
Other contracts: (contracts for prescribed burning, prairie reconstructions, woody encroachment, etc. Also includes cost-share agreements for private land projects)	26,500	26,500	0		0
Other direct operating costs: vehicle fleet costs (e.g. ATV, Pick-up, ASV tracked vehicle)	7,500	7,500	0		0
Supplies: herbicide, safety supplies, etc	3,500	3,500	0		0
COLUMN TOTAL	**$75,000**	**$74,990**	**$10**	**$0**	**$10**

Habitat Conservation Partnership
Prairie Management
2K