

2009 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2011

PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Farm Bill Assistance Project

PROJECT MANAGER: Tabor Hoek

AFFILIATION: MN Board of Water and Soil Resources

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FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2009, Chp. 143, Sec.2, Subd.4i

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$1,000,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

A joint effort of MN Board of Water and Soil Resources, MN Dept. of Natural Resources, MN Pheasants Forever, and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the focus was acceleration of technical assistance to private landowners for enrollment in federal USDA conservation programs as they relate to grassland and wetland resources. This effort provided 16 full time equivalents at the field level with a goal to establish or restore 50,000 ac. of grassland and wetlands during the 2 year period ending June 1, 2011. This goal was exceeded with a total enrollment of 69,081 acres resulting in \$79,000,000 of USDA program payments coming to MN landowners for implementing conservation practices on their land. Efforts of this project will continue for at least another 2 years under new funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and partner agency contributions.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Overall project results and its impact can be found in the Minnesota Conservation Lands Summary table found at http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/easements/COENROL_083111.pdf.

Trust Fund 2009 Work Program

Date of Report: August 3, 2011
Date of Next Progress Report: July 31, 2011
Date of Work Program Approval: June 16, 2009
Project Completion Date: June 30, 2011

I. PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Farm Bill Assistance Project

Project Manager: Tabor Hoek
Affiliation: MN Board of Water and Soil Resources
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City / State / Zip: Marshall, MN 56258
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Web Site Address: www.bwsr.state.mn.us

Location: *Statewide*

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|----|-----------|
| Total Trust Fund Project Budget: | Trust Fund Appropriation | \$ | 1,000,000 |
| | Minus Amount Spent: | \$ | 919,446 |
| | Equal Balance: | \$ | 80,554 |

Legal Citation: M.L. 2009, Chp. 143, Sec. 2, Subd. 4i

Appropriation Language:

\$1,000,000 is from the trust fund to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to provide funding for technical staff to assist in the implementation provisions of conservation programs including the federal farm bill conservation programs. Documentation must be provided on the number of landowner contacts, program participation, federal dollars leveraged, quantifiable criteria, and measurement of the improvements to water quality and habitat.

II. PROJECT SUMMARY AND RESULTS:

Overall Project Outcome and Results

A joint effort of MN Board of Water and Soil Resources, MN Dept. of Natural Resources, MN Pheasants Forever, and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the focus was acceleration of technical assistance to private landowners for enrollment in federal USDA conservation programs as they relate to grassland and wetland resources. This effort provided 16 full time equivalents at the field level with a goal to establish or restore 50,000 ac. of grassland and wetlands during the 2 year period ending June 1, 2011. This goal was exceeded with a total enrollment of 69,081 acres resulting in \$79,000,000 of USDA program payments coming to MN landowners for implementing conservation practices on their land. Efforts of this

project will continue for at least another 2 years under new funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and partner agency contributions.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

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http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/easements/COENROL_083111.pdf.

III. PROGRESS SUMMARY AS OF: June 30, 2011

Completion of employment of the 22.19 fte's within 36 counties. Staff worked total of 88,106 hours and have accomplished 69,081 ac. of wetland, grassland and management activities. This total exceeds the original two year goal of 50,000 ac. We have now leveraged approximately \$79,000,000 in federal USDA Farm Program funds as a result of this project. In addition to the direct accomplishments of this project, numerous other projects were accomplished as a result of the FBA marketing effort, but were handed off to a partner organization to achieve the landowners final objectives. An example of this might be a landowner choosing to sell fee title to a public agency vs. enrollment in a CRP contract.

At the close of the project, we have a remaining balance of \$80,554 that was not able to be used. Reasons for this include staff vacancies and partner organizations providing funding that dovetails with LCCMR funding. BWSR will be issuing payment back to LCCMR and the ENRTF at the next available opportunity.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1:

Assistance on enrolling, retaining, and managing 50,000 acres of critical private grasslands, and wetlands.

Description:

This project will focus on enrollment, retention and management of 50,000 acres of native grasslands and wetlands over the two year project. This activity will occur on private land within the 23 million acre agricultural zone.

Management will occur on lands already established and in the greatest need based upon threat to quality of vegetation and location. New land enrollment as well as management activities will be targeted within key geographic areas, based on local priorities such as: DNR Working Lands Target Areas, CRP critical lands study, Riparian Buffer Initiative, RIM-WRP priority mapping, TMDL areas and local water management plans to name a few. Strategic staffing of 16 FTE's will be done within individual SWCD's through a competitive application process.

Process:

The Farm Bill Assistance Committee governs over this project and is made up of one member from DNR, BWSR and Pheasants Forever. This committee will make initial project selections by July 1, 2009. There is potential to build upon this initial listing with available funding as the project evolves and need arises. Staff positions will be selected for funding based upon historical performance, location within DNR Working Lands areas, resource opportunity/need, ability to provide match to grant, and goals identified by each applicant on their application. Upon recommendation of the committee the BWSR will enter into a contractual relationship with successful applicants starting July 1, 2009. These contracts with SWCD's will reimburse 70% of the cost for two years of 16 FTE's. The remaining 30% will be provided as cash match from local sources. For purposes of this project, a maximum FTE cost of \$45,000/year has been put in place.

Outcomes:

Participants will complete monthly progress reports that will track: hours spent, landowners contacted, acres enrolled or managed by resource type. An estimate of federal leveraged funds will also be included with each status report. At the end of each six month period, a summary will be prepared and submitted by the SWCD for reimbursement from BWSR. BWSR has been collecting this data since 2002 and will modify that process to accommodate the requirements of this work program.

Summary Budget Information for Result 1: Trust Fund Budget: \$1,000,000
Amount Spent: \$ 919,446
Balance: \$ 80,554

| Deliverable | Completion Date | Budget |
|---|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. Request for Proposals from SWCD's | June 30, 2009 | \$0 |
| 2. Contracts Implemented to Employ 16 FTE's for 2 years | July 30, 2009 | \$1,000,000 |
| 3. Enrollment or management of 50,000 acres | June 30, 2011 | \$0 |

Result Completion Date: June 30, 2011

Result Status as of: January 31, 2010

On April 14, 2009 the committee sent out the RFP for staffing assistance to SWCD's. The deadline for requests was May 29th. The committee met on June 9th to rank applications based on their stated goals and historic performance. At the June 24th BWSR meeting the board approved the project and authorized entering into contracts for implementation. Contracts were

sent out in July for local authorization. The application serves as the workplan for the position. Reimbursement for work accomplished is being done on a quarterly basis to help with cash flow for the positions. We currently have worked through the first two quarters of fiscal year 2010 as you will note in attachment B.

This project currently has 22.07 fte's employed providing service to 37 counties. Staff have worked a total of 20,347 hrs., made 5,628 landowner contacts, and have accomplished 15,765 ac. of critical buffer strips, wetland restoration, grassland habitat, and vegetation management. After the first six months, we are on track of obtaining our goal of 25,000 ac. per year and 50,000 over the two yr. project. It is estimated that this project has leveraged in excess of \$16,500,000 dollars of federal and other state funds to achieve these acreage amounts. Our initial goal was to employ 16 fte's with the LCCMR grant, but have been able to secure outside funding from DNR and BWSR to increase this to the current level of 22.07 fte's. Attachment B is the current status of where the positions are located. It summarizes how many hours have been approved for each position and the year-to-date reimbursement request. It further shows the reimbursement sent out by BWSR, with a breakdown of how much has been paid out from LCCMR and DNR funding sources. The balance column shows what remains available for each position through June 30, 2010.

Result Status as of: July 31, 2010

We have now concluded the first year of the two year project to employ technical staff. We had a slight staffing increase in the last six months due to workload in one county needing to be met. We currently have 22.19 fte's covering 36 counties. Landowner contacts continue to be made for a cumulative project total of 11,048 achieving 30,751 ac. Of this amount 20,009 ac. of grassland and wetlands have been added with the balance of 10,742 in management activities on existing grassland. We have exceeded the initial goal of 25,000 ac. each of the two years. This project has now leveraged an estimated \$31,000,000 in federal and other state project funding. With the outlook of a summer 2010 CRP signup as well as some very successful easement options funded by the State of MN, we should easily accomplish or exceed our goal for the second and final year. Attachment B has been updated to show the conclusion of the first year.

In preparation for the second year the FBA committee has sent out an RFP for positions in May to existing participants. In June the committee reviewed the applications for past success and future goals. The recommendation for funding was brought to the BWSR board on June 23rd for approval. We are currently working to secure second year contracts with participants. The committee has also secured an additional \$150,000 in funding from DNR.

Based upon our current budget for this project, we will easily expend the remainder of the LCCMR funding by June 30, 2011.

Result Status as of: January 31, 2011

We are maintaining the 22.19 fte's covering 36 counties. Landowner contacts continue to be made for a cumulative project total of 17,240 achieving 56,289 ac. Of this amount 42,403 ac. of grassland and wetlands have been added with the balance of 13,886ac. in management activities on existing grassland. We have exceeded the two year goal of 50,000 ac. This project has now leveraged an estimated \$65,000,000 in federal and other state project funding. We had a very successful CRP signup in 2010 and there is another signup scheduled for 2011 along with MN Bonding and LSOHC funding for RIM easements. Attachment B has been updated to show progress to Dec. 31, 2010.

Result Status as of: June 30, 2011

In the final six months of this project we finished with the 22.19 fte's covering 36 counties. Landowner contacts totaled 25,817 achieving 69,081 ac. Of this amount 51,262 ac. of grassland and wetlands have been added with the balance of 17,819 ac. of management activities on existing grassland. We have exceeded the two year goal of 50, 000 ac. This project has now leveraged an estimated \$79,000,000 in federal and other state project funding. We had a successful CRP signup in spring of 2011, but continue to see CRP expire in MN at a faster rate. Other sources of funding continue to be Bonding, Clean Water Fund and LSOHC funding for RIM easements. Attachment B has been updated to show progress to June 30, 2011.

Final Report Summary: July 31, 2011

Final numbers for this project were 25,817 landowner contacts achieving 69,081 ac. Of this amount 51,262 ac. of grassland and wetlands have been added with the balance of 17,819 ac. of management activities on existing grassland. We have exceeded the two year goal of 50, 000 ac. This project has now leveraged an estimated \$79,000,000 in federal and other state project funding. We were able to spend most of the allocated funds, but will be returning a balance of \$80,554 due to staff vacancies. Attachment B has been updated to show progress to June 30, 2011. With the approval of M.L. 2011 Acceleration of Minnesota Conservation Assistance funding \$625,000 we will be able to maintain some of the core functions of this project into the future.

V. TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET:

Contracts: \$ 1,000,000 for Contracts with SWCD's for employment of 16 FTE's.

TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET: \$1,000,000

VI. PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners:

MN BWSR, MN DNR, MN Pheasants Forever, and MN SWCD's

B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy:

This project creates an employment opportunity for 16 FTE's over the next two years and is an investment in our natural resources. The investment in 16 FTE's leverages an estimated \$75,000,000 in federal and state conservation program payments to MN landowners. This project is necessary to continue progress towards meeting Minnesota's prairie and wetland restoration needs as identified in the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan, July 2008 (SCPP).

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

See Attachment B

D. Spending History:

During the period July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2009 there was a cash total of \$2,216,728 plus an estimated \$400,000 of inkind.

VII. DISSEMINATION:

Data is collected on time spent, acres impacted and landowners contacted on a monthly basis and is available to the project partners and participants. The overall status of conservation programs in MN is available at www.bwsr.state.mn.us/easements/COENROL.XLS

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic work program progress reports will be submitted not later than January 2010, July 2010, and January 2011. A final work program report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 1, 2011 as requested by the LCCMR.

Attachment A: Budget Detail for 2009 Projects - Summary and a Budget page for each partner (if applicable)

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|--|---|---------------------|------------------------------|--|--|
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| Project Title: Minnesota Farm Bill Assistance Project | | | | | |
| Project Manager Name: Tabor Hoek | | | | | |
| Trust Fund Appropriation: \$ 1,000,000 | | | | | |
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| | | | | | |
| 2009 Trust Fund Budget | <u>Result 1 Budget:</u> | Amount Spent | Balance July 31, 2010 | | |
| | <i>Assistance on 50,000ac. of critical private land projects.</i> | | | | |
| BUDGET ITEM | | | | | |
| Contracts with SWCDs for Staff | 1,000,000 | 919,446 | 80,554 | | |
| COLUMN TOTAL | \$1,000,000 | \$919,446 | \$80,554 | | |