

Trust Fund 2009 Work Program

Date of Report: May 28, 2009

Date of Next Progress Report: December 31, 2009

Date of Work Program Approval:

Project Completion Date: June 30, 2011

I. PROJECT TITLE: Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem

Project Manager: Thomas J. Kalahar
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Location: Portions of the Minnesota River Valley located in Lac qui Parle, Yellow Medicine, Chippewa, Redwood & Renville Counties.

Total Trust Fund Project Budget:	Trust Fund Appropriation	\$ 1,500,000
	Minus Amount Spent:	\$ 0
	Equal Balance:	\$ 1,500,000

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

Appropriation Language: (h) Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem. \$1,500,000 is from the trust fund to the Board of Water and Soil Resources, in cooperation with the Renville Soil and Water Conservation District, to acquire perpetual easements of unique granite rock outcrops located in the Upper Minnesota River Valley and to restore their ecological integrity

II. PROJECT SUMMARY AND RESULTS:

The Minnesota River Valley contains exposed ancient granite rock outcrops that provide unique landscape features, as well as habitat for specialized plant and animal communities rarely found elsewhere in Minnesota. Rock Outcrops are threatened by mining, overgrazing and other development interests. Removal of the rock results in severe degradation and permanent loss of these unique landscape features. The Minnesota River Corridor is easily susceptible to fragmentation due to the fact that it is narrow. Past development activities and mining operations have already fragmented large areas of the fragile Minnesota River Corridor. Demand for aggregate is growing as our population and infrastructure grow. Aggregate is in short supply in many areas, including the metro, because development has made it inaccessible in those areas. Interest in mining exposed granite rock outcrops in the Minnesota River Valley is high because the rock is readily available and there is no

overburden to remove. This encourages the practice of horizontal mining, removing the easiest and most profitable rock, and moving on. Unlike gravel mining operations, there is no reclamation plan possible for replacing this unique landscape feature once it is removed. Rock outcrops are a component of the Minnesota River's riparian zone, and destruction of this unique habitat will degrade the water quality and wildlife habitat of the Minnesota River and its tributaries. This project will offer an economically viable option for landowners to preserve and enhance rock outcrops within a five county area of the Upper Minnesota River Valley. A total of 530 acres will be protected using perpetual conservation easements.

III. PROGRESS SUMMARY AS OF

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1: Habitat Protection through Perpetual Easements

Description: This project will protect approximately 530 acres of rock outcrop complexes within the Minnesota River Corridor and its tributaries. Using several layers of data, including the MN County Biological Survey, this project will utilize a scoring system to identify and protect the highest quality sites along the Minnesota River Corridor within the five counties. Easement applications will be prioritized by a local work group comprised of technical experts from local, state, and federal agencies. Easements will be secured through the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) conservation easement process. The easement will be held by the State of Minnesota working through the Board of Water and Soil Resources and the local Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). Compensation for easements to willing landowners will be secured using the local cropland rates of the RIM easement program. Administration and processing of the easements will be done through the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and Renville, Redwood, Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, and Lac qui Parle SWCD staff. The \$37,500 in Deliverable 3, is a maximum allowable in this category. If multiple easements are funded in one county, the administration funds to that SWCD will be capped at \$7,500. If no easements are funded in a county or counties, those offices **will not** receive any funds from this category allowing for transfer of funds to Deliverable 1 to fund additional acres.

Summary Budget Information for Result 1: Trust Fund Budget: \$1,337,250
Amount Spent: \$ -0-
Balance: \$ 1,337,250

Deliverable	Completion Date	Budget
1. Easement Acquisition – 530 acres @ \$2,400/ac	12/31/2010	\$1,272,000
2. Promotion of program, landowner contacts & initial completion of applications (\$2,500 to each of the 5 SWCD offices—numerous contacts resulting in 5-7 apps per county)	12/31/2009	12,500

3. Easement processing/admin/conservation planning/practice implementation for funded easements (maximum \$7,500 per SWCD office)	12/31/2010	37,500
4. Legal fees & title insurance (\$2,000/easement X 5 easements)	12/31/2010	10,000
5. BWSR -- Easement processing (\$350/easement X 5 easements)	12/31/2010	1,750
6. Grant Administration (Renville SWCD)	6/30/2011	3,500

Result Completion Date:

Result Status as of *December 31, 2009*:

Result Status as of *June 30, 2010*:

Result Status as of *December 31, 2010*:

Result Status as of *June 30, 2011*:

Final Report Summary: *June 30, 2011*

Result 2: Habitat Protection Invasive Species Removal

Description: A Conservation Plan is developed for each RIM easement. The plan outlines conservation practices such as removal of invasive species and livestock exclusion, and provides for improvement measures. Habitat maintenance may include rotational grazing systems, fencing, native and non-native invasive species removal (i.e. Red Cedar, Buckthorn, Siberian Elm, & Sumac), prescribed burning and in some cases seeding of native species. Restoration activities will begin as easements are recorded and landowners issued easement payment. Individual easement conservation plan practices will be targeted for completion within one year of easement recording. The \$162,750 is a maximum amount to be spent from this grant. Every effort will be made to use funds from Minnesota DNR, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, BWSR Programs, USDA programs and funds from private conservation groups for practice implementation. If enough of those funds can be secured by the time the work needs to be completed, implementation funds will then be transferred to Result 1, Deliverable to fund acquisition of additional easement acres. In the 2007 5(b) grant we were able to secure over \$31,000 in funds from other sources to fund Habitat Restoration. \$20,500 of practice implementation grant funds were then used to fund additional easement acres.

Summary Budget Information for Result 2: Trust Fund Budget: \$162,750
Amount Spent: \$ -0-
Balance: \$162,750

Deliverable	Completion Date	Budget
1. Conservation Plan Practice implementation for 5 easements totaling 530 acres.	6/30/2011	\$162,750

Result Completion Date:

Result Status as of December 31, 2009:

Result Status as of June 30, 2010:

Result Status as of December 31, 2010:

Result Status as of June 30, 2011:

Final Report Summary: June 30, 2011

V. TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET:

Personnel: Maximum \$53,500

Each of the five SWCD offices will receive \$2,500 to promote the program within their county at an estimated 3% FTE. The work involves media promotion, direct contact with landowners who have eligible lands, and working with interested landowners on initial applications to be submitted for scoring. It is anticipated that there will be an average of 5-7 applications taken per county (25-30 apps scored). Unfunded applications will be held and landowners contacted should additional funds become available from this grant or a future grant. Renville SWCD will receive \$3,500 to administer the grant at an estimated 4% FTE. There is \$37,500 budgeted for Easement Specialists to process easements, write conservation plans, work with landowners, contractors and other agency staff on restoration activities. This is budgeted at \$7,500/easement and comes to 9% FTE. This amount is the maximum allowable under this category. After the scoring process, administration payments will be adjusted based on number of easements funded per county. If no easements are funded in a county or counties, those offices will not receive a payment. If a county/counties have multiple easements, the administration funds will be capped at a maximum of \$7,500 per SWCD. If funds remain, a revision will be requested to allow funding of additional easement acres.

Contracts: \$ 11,750

Contracts include \$350/easement to the BWSR to process RIM easements for a total of \$1,750 (\$350X5). Also included in the budget item is \$10,000 or \$2,000/easement for attorney fees to do title searches, generate title opinions and for payment of title insurance policies.

Equipment/Tools/Supplies: \$0

Acquisition, including easements: \$1,272,000

This amount is based on protecting 530 acres/\$2,400/acre using the BWSR RIM cropland rates in the township where the land is located.

Other (Restoration): \$162,750

Based on an average of \$307/acre for 530 acres for Invasive Species Removal, prescribed burning and seeding. \$162,750 is the maximum amount of grant funds for Restoration. If funds can be secured from other sources, those funds will be used and a revision will be requested to allow funding of additional easement acres with grant funds.

TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET: \$1,500,000

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$3,500: N/A

VI. PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners:

Renville SWCD is the lead for grant administration. Throughout the grant period, SWCD staff in Renville, Redwood, Lac qui Parle, Chippewa and Yellow Medicine Counties will work with landowners in their respective county to promote and process easements, as well as develop conservation and restoration plans. The US Fish & Wildlife Service and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will provide staff time for the technical evaluation of easement applications and restoration practices. County Boards of Commissioners along with the Upper and Lower Sioux Indian Communities have provided letters of support for this project. Soil & Water Conservation District Boards of Supervisors in the five Counties have each submitted a letter of support and have pledged staff time aimed toward the successful completion of this project.

B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy:

Protecting the rock outcrops is important to the Dakota people. To degrade/destroy rock outcrops or sacred landscapes is to destroy the Dakota Culture. The Dakota consider the Minnesota River Valley their spiritual home. Their relationship with nature calls for reverence, respect, and humility.

Protection and restoration of rock outcrops will preserve unique landscapes and habitats and benefit the numerous endangered, threatened, and special concern species found in this ecosystem. The rock outcrops, and their associated wetland

complexes, are home to the following state and federal rare, threatened, and endangered species (both flora and fauna): **Federal Threatened:** Prairie bush clover. **State Endangered:** Wolf's spikerush, lichen (*Buellia nigra*), Ball cactus, Henslow's sparrow. **State Threatened:** Kittentails, Short-pointed umbrella sedge, Dakota skipper, Ottoe skipper, Loggerhead shrike. **State Special Concern:** Waterhyssop, Larger water-starwort, mudwort, Great Plains prickly pear, Clustered broomrape, Five-lined skink, Bald eagle, Pawnee skipper, Powesheik skipper, Regal fritillary. **Species of Greatest Conservation Need:** Upland sandpiper. **Non-listed/tracked species:** Carolina foxtail, Eastern fox snake, Three-stamened waterwort, Little barley, Virginia forget-me-not, Mousetail.

Conservation plans may require the removal of native and non-native invasive species, such as Red Cedar, Buckthorn, Siberian Elm and Sumac, and intensive management and will encourage establishment and the proliferation of specialized plant and animal communities rarely found elsewhere in Minnesota. Mining and intensive grazing disturbance leave the land susceptible to increased soil and mineral erosion and increased nutrient loading. This project will protect the water quality of the Minnesota River, its tributaries, and rock outcrop wetlands, by preventing mining and unmanaged grazing on rock outcrops. The protection of the rock outcrop associated wetlands from mining, development, and agricultural production will insure that the inherent benefits of these existing wetlands, such as groundwater recharge and reduced flooding impacts, are perpetuated.

In 2007 the LCCMR funded the initial \$563,000 to protect Granite Rock Outcrops and Associated Wetlands in Redwood and Renville Counties. A total of 212.4 acres is enrolled into Perpetual RIM Easements as a result of that grant. The current project seeks to protect an additional 530 acres and expands the eligible area to five counties along the Minnesota River. Prescribed grazing, haying, and prescribed burning will all be essential tools in the future management of this unique landscape.

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

Minnesota DNR & US Fish & Wildlife Service will provide \$9,600 in in-kind for staff to do site visits of all (estimate 25-30) applications and score and prioritize sites for acceptance & funding. In addition there will be a total of \$35,510 provided by the BWSR native Buffer Cost-Share Program, Minnesota DNR and the US Fish & Wildlife Service to assist with the cost of invasive species removal and other conservation practice implementation. Staff will continue to pursue additional funding for practice implementation.

D. Spending History: \$563,000.00 has been spent on this project since July 1, 2007 under ML 2007, Chap. 30, Sec 2, Subd. 5(b). \$517,410.72 was spent to fund four easements protecting 212.4 acres. \$6,540.00 was spent for professional services including \$350/easement to BWSR for RIM easement development & processing, attorney fees for title searches & title opinions as well as payment for title insurance policies. \$6,049.28 of grant funds were spent for Habitat Restoration.

In addition there was \$31,440.72 obtained from other sources for Habitat Restoration. Those sources included US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Minnesota DNR from both Wildlife & Ecological Services Divisions, the State of Minnesota Native Buffer Cost-Share program and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service EQIP program. There was a total of \$33,000 in Personnel costs for this project which was disseminated to the Renville & Redwood SWCD offices.

VII. DISSEMINATION: The Renville SWCD website (www.renvilleswcd.com) continues to update the public on the Rock Outcrop projects by posting information & photos in the "News" section of the website. Each SWCD in Minnesota is required to maintain a website. Those websites contain information on available programs and update the public on current topics of interest in the county.

Each SWCD has a unique position within their community to deliver conservation programs. SWCDs are the local "go to" agency for conservation program delivery and the staff are both trusted and respected by local landowners. Each SWCD office will personally contact landowners who have high quality rock outcrop landscapes on their property. This one-on-one contact will be a major source of providing information to the public.

The 2007 LCCMR Grant received significant media coverage in the area and the 2009 Grant funding has been publicized. Recently there was an article in the weekend "Outdoors" section of the West Central Tribune publicizing the project and encouraging interested landowners to contact their local SWCD staff if they would like to make application for this grant or for potential future grant applications. Tom Kalahar, Project Manager, was interviewed for the article and quoted several times. He was also interviewed by Fred Harris for an article on the Hard Rock Outcrop Easement Program that was published in the March-April 2009 issue of the Minnesota Conservation Volunteer magazine. Individual SWCD offices are also contacting their local newspapers to include articles on the Hard Rock Easement Program. In addition to that information, a landowner workshop was held in Granite Falls on March 28, 2009 which provided information to interested landowners on the Hard Rock Outcrop Easement Program.

Individual SWCD offices will continue to keep their local press informed on the progress of the program. Tom Kalahar will be in contact with the regional West Central Tribune of Willmar, MN as potential stories unfold.

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS: Periodic work program progress reports will be submitted not later than December 31, 2009, June 30, 2010, and December 31, 2010. A final work program report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 1, 2011 as requested by the LCCMR.

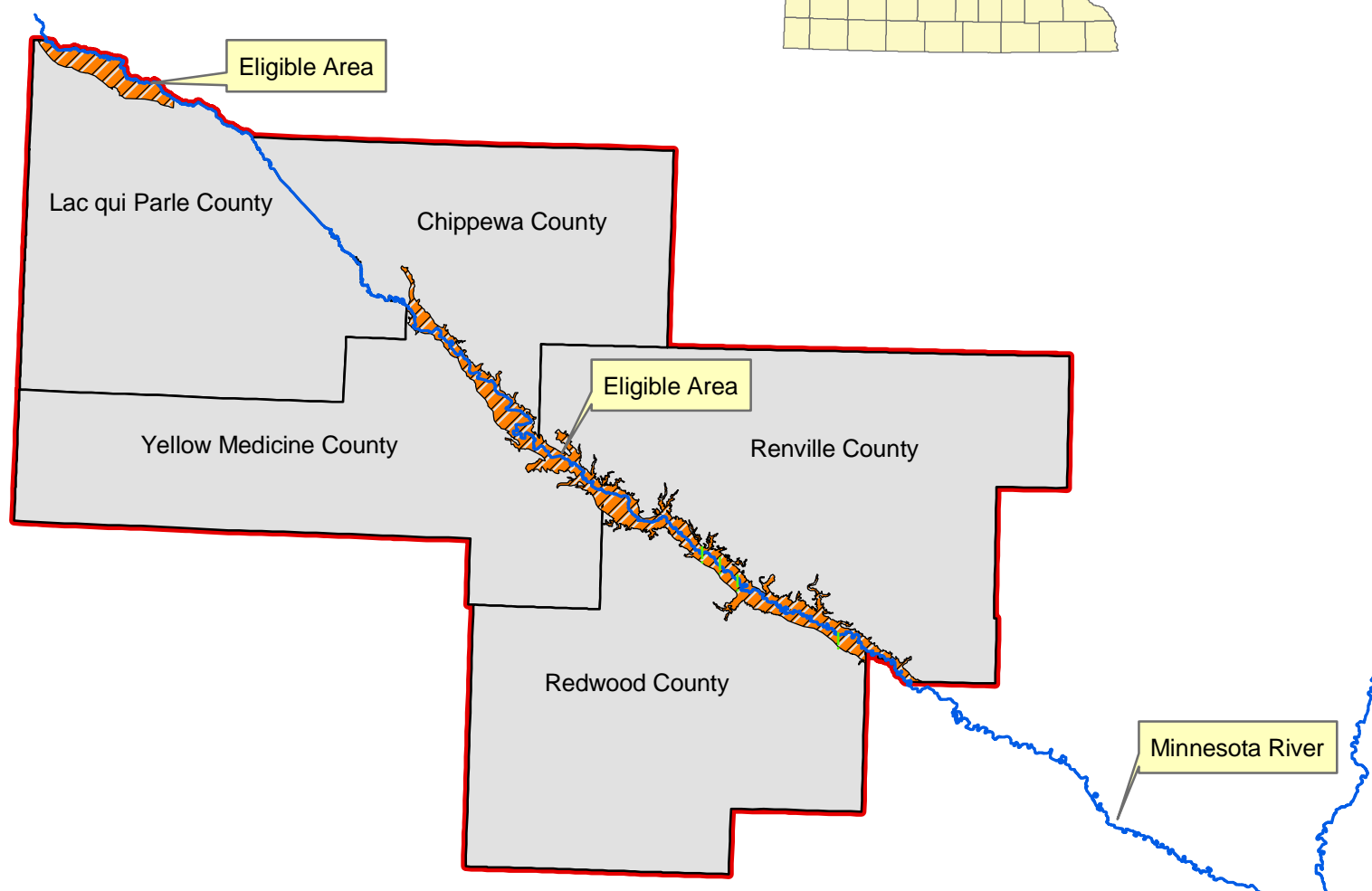
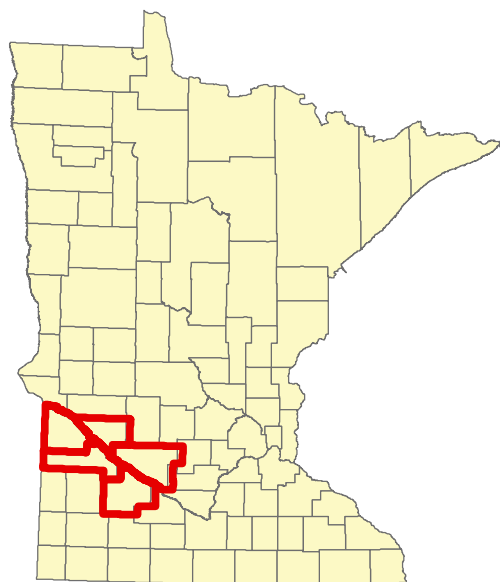
IX. RESEARCH PROJECTS:

Attachment A: Budget Detail for 2009 Projects								
Project Title: Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem								
Project Manager Name: Thomas J. Kalahar								
Trust Fund Appropriation: \$1,500,000								
2009 Trust Fund Budget	Result 1 Budget:	Amount Spent (date)	Balance 05-07-2009	Result 2 Budget:	Amount Spent (date)	Balance 05-07-2009	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
	Habitat Protection through Perpetual Easements			Habitat Protection Invasive Species Removal				
BUDGET ITEM								
PERSONNEL: wages and benefits Technical staff from 5 cooperating SWCD offices. \$2,500/SWCD for promotion (3% FTE) and landowner contacts to generate applications from interested landowners (25-30 apps).	\$12,500	\$0	\$12,500				\$12,500	\$12,500
\$7,500/easement for easement processing, conservation plans, working with landowners, contractors and other agencies on practice implementation (9% FTE)--maximum per SWCD of \$7,500	\$37,500		\$37,500				\$37,500	\$37,500
\$3,500 to Renville SWCD for grant management (4% FTE).	\$3,500		\$3,500				\$3,500	\$3,500
Contracts								
Professional/technical BWSR for Easement development & processing (\$350/easement X 5)	\$1,750	\$0	\$1,750				\$1,750	\$1,750
Easement acquisition (\$2,400/acre X 530 acres)	\$1,272,000	\$0	\$1,272,000				\$1,272,000	\$1,272,000
Professional Services for Acq. (Attorney fees for title searches, develop title opinions and pay for title insurance policies: \$2,000/easement X 5 easements)	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000				\$10,000	\$10,000
Other May include rotational grazing systems, fencing, native & non-native invasive species removal, prescribed burning & in some cases seeding of native grasses. \$307/acres X 530 acres				\$162,750	\$0	\$162,750	\$162,750	\$162,750
COLUMN TOTAL	\$1,337,250	\$0	\$1,337,250	\$162,750	\$0	\$162,750	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000





LCCMR Granite Rock Outcrop Grant Eligible Area

ML 2007 5(b) – 212.4 acres
in 2 participating counties

ML 2009 4(h) - approximately 530 acres
in 5 participating counties



Legend

-  ML 2007 5(b) Easements
-  MN River
-  Grant Eligible Area
-  Participating Counties

Upper MN River Valley

4

06/11/2009

93,000 46,500 0 Subd. 4h 93,000 Feet

