

2011-2012 MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

About half of Minnesota's 200,000 acres of remaining native prairie is not formally protected, meaning it's in the hands of private landowners. This project aims to work with landowners of native prairie sites identified by the MN County Biological Survey (MCBS) and provide them protection options and support their conservation efforts through a suite of tools offered by the DNR Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) Program. About 200 acres of high quality native prairie will be acquired by the DNR and permanently protected as Native Prairie Bank (NPB) conservation easements. Native habitat restoration and enhancement activities will be implemented on about 900 acres of NPBs and high priority private prairie lands threatened by human impacts, invasive species, and lack of natural disturbance regimes. Private landowners will also receive incentives to protect and enhance their native prairie.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: NPB Acquisition of Prairie of Biodiversity Significance **Budget: \$570,000**

The SNA Program will protect and buffer native prairie sites of biodiversity significance by acquisition of NPB conservation easements on ~200 acres. NPB conservation easement baseline reports and monitoring would be completed on about 22 sites; including those sites acquired through these funds (~1-5 sites) and up to 17 existing NPB easement sites. As of March 2010, the SNA Program manages 96 NPB conservation easements of which 13 have baseline property reports; creating a backlog of 83 baseline reports to complete. Priority sites are identified by MCBS and target rare and endangered plant and animal species, high quality plant communities, and key habitats for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Any buffers, or lands needing restoration, will be completed using a combination of funds from Activity 2 below and/or bonding appropriations. It is anticipated that only 10 of the 200 acquired will need restoration.

Outcome	Completion Date
1a. acquisition of NPB conservation easement ~200 acres of native prairie	FY12-13; 6/30/13
1b. baseline property reports & monitoring for ~22 NPB easements	FY12-13; 6/30/13

Activity 2: Native Prairie Restoration & Enhancement **Budget: \$250,000**

Restoration and enhancement activities would be completed on about 900 acres at up to about 15 NPBs and 5 native prairie stewardship sites. Management practices at ~5 NPB sites would be measured to evaluate if objectives were met as part of adaptive management. This project will contribute towards implementation of the SWAP through restoration of native prairie needed to support SGCN (also Habitat Recommendation 5 of the SCPP). Restoration and enhancement activities – including bringing sites acquired up to minimum standards – would be carried out through landowner agreements, DNR staff, Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC), Sentence to Service (STS), volunteers, and/or contractors. Activities include seed collection, planting, exotics control, woody encroachment removal, boundary signing, prescribed burns, and monitoring. All restorations will use seeds/plants of a local ecotype, collected from onsite or within 25 miles. This activity and its funding would include all work needed to bring up to the Department's minimum standards those NPB easements acquired through this funding.

Outcome	Completion Date
2a. ~12 acres of prairie reconstruction (restoration)	FY13; 6/30/13
2b. ~120 acres of woody removal & exotics species treatment	FY12-13; 3/30/13
2c. ~780 acres of prescribed burns	FY12-13; 5/30/13
2d. NPB easement boundary signs & development work to meet minimum	FY13; 6/30/13

standards on NPB sites acquired through this funding (~2 sites)	
2e. adaptive management monitoring on ~5 NPB sites	FY13; 6/30/13

Activity 3: Native Prairie Landowner Assistance & Incentives

Budget: \$180,000

Private landowners will increase their stewardship of native prairie through a suite of strategies. Four prairie management workshops-field days for private landowners and other practitioners will be held. DNR staff will meet with ~20 landowners to provide technical consultation on how to best manage their prairie. At least 10 landowners will receive a comprehensive prairie stewardship plan including an evaluation their prairie’s condition, identification of management needs, and recommendations for management action. In addition, ~50 native prairie landowners will be contacted and site visits conducted to enroll or recertify them in the Prairie Tax Exemption (PTE) program.

Outcome	Completion Date
3a. 4 workshops-field days for prairie landowners & practitioners	FY13; 6/30/13
3b. consultations, guidance, mgmt. asst., etc. to 20 landowners	FY13; 6/30/13
3c. prairie stewardship plans provided to 20 prairie landowners	FY13; 6/30/13
3d. ~50 landowners enrolled or recertified in Prairie Tax Exemption	FY13; 6/30/13

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

This proposal includes the SNA program’s native prairie partnership project work with Habitat Conservation Partnership (instead of a funding proposal through HCP), The Nature Conservancy (native prairie acquisition, restoration, enhancement and associated monitoring), and the Minnesota River Green Corridors Initiative (landowner outreach for potential NPB easement acquisition on MCBS sites in the MN River Valley). These later two partners are submitting separate, but coordinated LCCMR projects. These efforts are complementary not redundant; all accomplishments on joint projects would be prorated.

B. Timeline Requirements

Two years (July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2013) is requested to provide multiple field seasons for development work and to take protection projects through basic improvements needed. As specified above, work through this appropriation on Activities 1, 2a, and 2b are expected to span both years of the biennium, while work on the other activities will start in FY13 or after comparable funds from the pending 2010 SNA project funded through the LCCMR are expended or encumbered.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

The Division’s long-term goal is to permanently protect an additional 30-35,000 acres of quality native prairie either as NPB or SNA. Thus, the Division could utilize support from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust fund of \$1M to \$10M per biennium for native prairie protection and stewardship over the next 25 years. Historically the Scientific and Natural Area program’s capacity to protect lands has paralleled the acquisition funding available (i.e. a significant acceleration of protection efforts requires an increase in acquisition capacity). DNR incurs a number of one-time costs upon acquisition of a conservation easement, including costs for preparation of a baseline report to document the condition of the property, as well as recurring costs for periodic monitoring of the easement. Costs may vary widely by easement and depend on factors such as size, location or specific easement terms. Fiscal requirements for long-term stewardship of DNR’s conservation easements, including an estimate of periodic monitoring costs, will be included in a report to be submitted in February 2011 per the Trust Fund 2008 Work Program for DNR’s Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program Plan, ML 2008, Chap. 367, Sec. 2, Subd. 5(h).

2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget - DNR Native Prairie (SNA Prog)

IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET 2 years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Personnel: see below - all FTEs are for 1 or 2 years depending on outcome	\$ -
- Activities 1-3: Classified & unclassified <u>specialists & technicians</u> paid almost exclusively with special project funds (2 FTEs - for 1 or 2 years)	\$ 178,400
- Activities 1-3: Classified <u>project & contract coordinator</u> paid primarily with special project funds (0.15 FTE - for 1 or 2 years)	\$ 19,200
- Activity 2: Project crews (classified or unclassified laborers paid primarily with special project funds and unclassified seasonal burn crew 0.35 FTEs - for 1 or 2 years)	\$ 16,800
Contracts: Professional/technical Contractors (state bid process) for deliverables including: Activity 1b: NPB easement baseline property reports & monitoring (~\$33K); Activity 2e: adaptive management monitoring (~\$13K); Activity 3: 3c private prairie stewardship plans (~\$60K) and 3d prairie tax exemption certification and enrollment (~\$20K)	\$ 126,000
- <u>Other contracts</u> (MCC or state bid process) for Activity 2 deliverables including 2b woody encroachment removal & exotics control (~\$55K), 2c prescribed burning (~\$55K), and 2d site development (sign installation, etc) (~\$500)	\$ 110,500
Equipment: Activities 1-3: Fleet charges for trucks, cars, & equipment, e.g. mowers, seeders	\$ 14,000
Tools/Supplies/Printing: Activity 1: supplies & printing (~\$0.3K); Activity 2: 2a-2c & 2e parts, tools, repair costs & supplies for restoration, enhancement & monitoring (~\$1.3K); 2d signs & posts, etc (~\$0.7K); Activity 3: 3a workshops & events supplies & printing (~\$1.5K); 3b-3d supplies & printing for landowner consults, stewardship plans & PTE supplies & printing (~\$1.5K).	\$ 5,300
Acquisition (Permanent Easements): Activity 1: DNR Native Prairie Bank conservation easement acquisition (~200 acres) including real estate transaction costs	\$ 475,800
Travel: Activity 1-3; in-state travel (non-fleet mileage, lodging, & meals) essential to completing project activities	\$ 5,000
Additional Budget Item: Activity 2a-2b: landowner costshare for restoration work	\$ 49,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST	\$ 1,000,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	Subtotal	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: Potential: partial landowner donations, federal State Wildlife Action grants.		\$ -	
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: - Estimated Dept Share Services - Estimated Division Support Costs		\$ 72,200 \$ 61,200	Division \$\$ appropriate for proj. activities; pending biennial budget approval
In-kind Services During Project Period: DNR office facilities, supervisor-manager time, & other support will be provided (but contributions not tracked)		\$ -	
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation: (as of 4/8/10)	Approp Balance	Total Balance	<i>(see to left)</i>
2008 Accelerated Prairie (Results 3,4,& 6 only) \$563.5K encumbered	\$20,829		
2009 HCP 6 (Native Prairie - Eco only) \$ 34.1K encumbered	\$20,455	\$ 41,284	
Funding History - 2007-2010 by Source & Year (total appropriation)	Private/NPB Prairie \$\$	Total Funding	<i>(see to left)</i>
ENRTF 2007 Prairie Stewardship (\$220,000)	\$220,000		
ENRTF 2007 HCP 4 (Native Prairie - Eco only: \$100,000)	\$50,000		
ENRTF 2008 Accelerated Prairie (Results 3,4,& 6 only - \$975,000)	\$975,000		
ENRTF 2008 HCP 5 (Native Prairie - Eco only - \$75,000)	\$37,500		
ENRTF 2009 HCP 6 (Native Prairie - Eco only - \$75,000)	\$37,500		
ENRTF 2010 SNA-Native Prairie (pending - \$1,175,000)	\$471,700		
ENRTF 2010 HCP 6.5 (Native Prairie - Eco only) (pending - \$63,300)	\$31,700		
LSOHC 2010 Accelerated Prairie (SNA program only) (pending - \$1,300,000)	\$640,000		
Bonding 2008 Native Prairie (\$4,000,000)	\$2,000,000		
Federal (available SFY08-10) Landowner Incentive Program (\$339,500)	\$339,500		
Other (available SFR09-10) The Conservation Fund (Doris Duke)	\$50,000		
Other partner contributions & landowner donations (not specified here)		\$4,852,900	

2011-2012 Acquisition List for Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Proposal

Project Title: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

Project Manager Name: Jason Garms

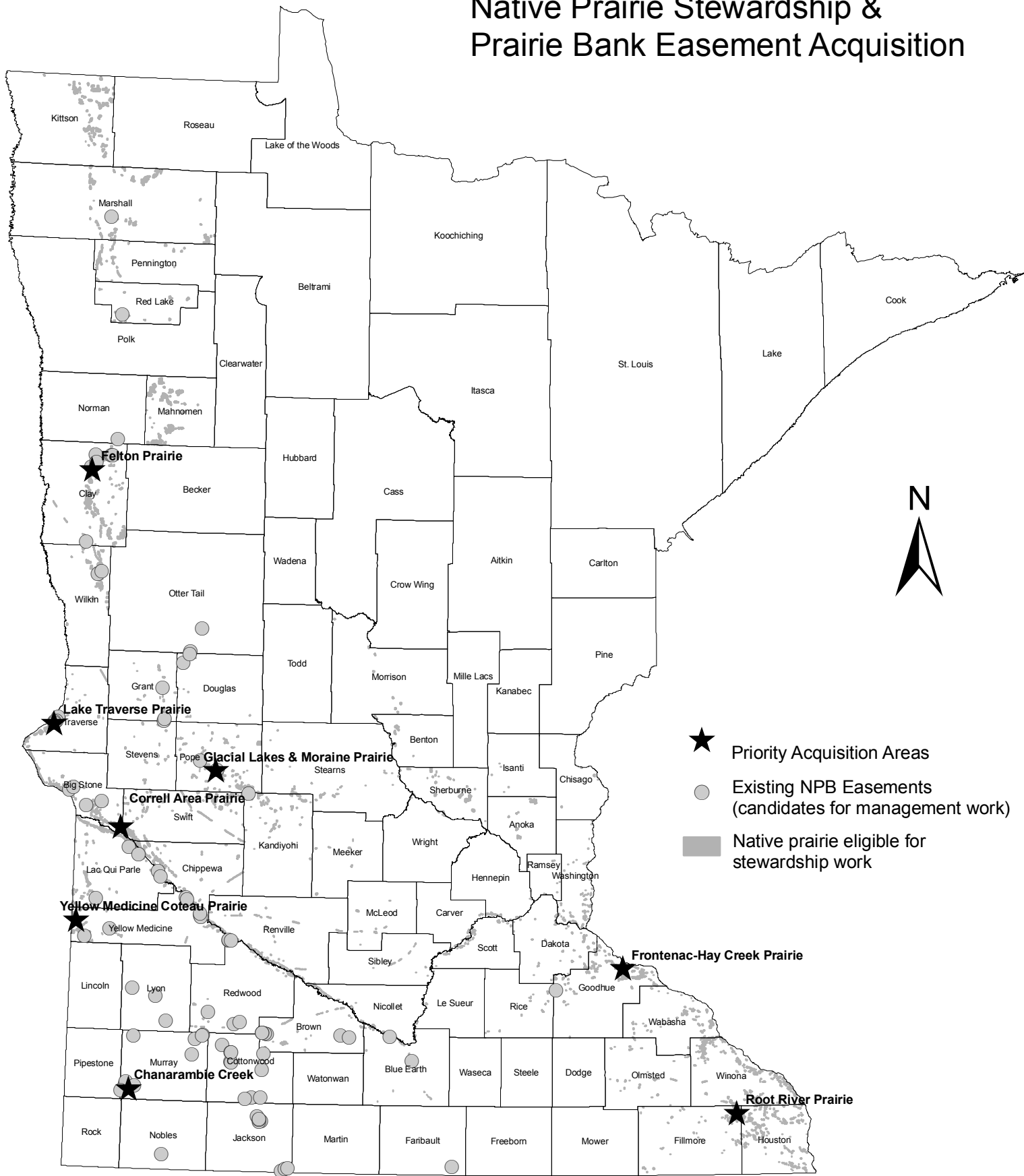
Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund \$ Request: \$1,000,000

Final Title Holder(s): Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (administered by Scientific & Natural Area Program)

#	Parcel Name	Acquisition Type (Fee-Title OR Conservation Easement)	County	Estimated # of Acres	Geographical Coordinates (Provide Latitude/Longitude OR UTM-X/UTM-Y)			
					Latitude	Longitude	UTM-X	UTM-Y
	Chanarambie Creek	NPB easement	Murray,Pipestone	100			258042	4866495
	Correll Prairie	NPB easement	Big Stone	200			245403	5014965
	Felton Prairie	NPB easement	Clay	200			238891	5213769
	Frontenac - Hay Creek Prairie	NPB easement	Goodhue	100			535677	4932767
	Glacial Lakes & Moraine Prairie	NPB easement	Pope	200			307591	5043821
	Lake Traverse Prairie	NPB easement	Traverse	70			216768	5070371
	Root River Prairies	NPB easement	Houston, Filmore, Winona	50			599661	4851588
	Yellow Medicine Coteau Prairie	NPB easement	Yellow Medicine	160			232251	4957954

NOTES: Sites listed alphabetically by project area working title. Proposed NPB projects are priorities identified by and/or recommended by MCBS. Additional projects are likely to be added to the list and priorities re-ordered to reflect best opportunities and risks to the resource at the time the funding is available. Most native prairie sites qualify for either NPB or state Scientific & Natural Area (SNA in separate LCCMR proposal) and which is used depends largely on landowner willingness at the time this funding is available.

2011-2012 Target Areas for Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition



Program Manager Qualifications

Project Manager: Jason Garms, Prairie Biologist
Affiliation Department of Natural Resources, Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA)
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Jason Garms is the Scientific and Natural Area's Prairie Biologist. The SNA Program's mission is to "preserve and perpetuate the ecological diversity of Minnesota's natural heritage, including landforms, fossil remains, plant and animal communities, rare and endangered species, or other biotic features and geological formations, for scientific study and public edification as components of a healthy environment". Mr. Garms is responsible for coordinating and administering programs designed to improve native prairie conservation and management on private lands. He provides programmatic direction and management for the Native Prairie Bank easement program, Native Prairie Tax Exemption program, and Prairie Stewardship Planning Assistance program. He has involved with the implementation of several previous LCMR projects, including:

- 2003 Forest & Prairie Stewardship on Public and Private Lands
- 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 Habitat Corridors Partnership
- 2005, 2007 Prairie Stewardship of Private Lands
- 2008 Accelerated Prairie Management, Survey, Acquisition and Evaluation

Mr. Garms has served as the Prairie Biologist with the SNA program since 2007. Other related experiences include:

Prairie Stewardship Specialist, MN DNR (2001-2007) Lead for the design and implementation of prairie protection and management activities for the southern region of Minnesota.

Land Protection Assistant, The Nature Conservancy (2001) Lead for the evaluation, delineation, and enrollment of USFWS Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Projects.

Biological Science Technician, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (1998-2000) Performed prairie habitat work on USFWS lands in Western Minnesota and Eastern South Dakota.

Education: Graduated from the South Dakota State University in 1997 with a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences.

Mr. Garms will provide overall management to this proposed LCCMR project. He has effectively demonstrated his capacity to manage programs and budgets, maintain accurate records, and direct staff. Mr. Garms has experience and demonstrated an ability to collaborate with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders in addressing complicated and contentious prairie management issues. He knows how to get work done on the ground.

