



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Approved Work Plan

## General Information

**ID Number:** 2026-113

**Staff Lead:** Tiffany Schaufler

**Date this document submitted to LCCMR:** May 19, 2026

**Project Title:** Partnership for Resilient Landscapes

**Project Budget:** \$2,638,000

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Josh Pommier

**Organization:** Pheasants Forever Inc

**Office Telephone:** (320) 292-5860

**Email:** [jpommier@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:jpommier@pheasantsforever.org)

**Web Address:** <https://www.pheasantsforever.org/>

## Project Reporting

**Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR:** June 17, 2026

**Reporting Schedule:** April 1 / October 1 of each year.

**Project Completion:** June 30, 2029

**Final Report Due Date:** August 14, 2029

## Legal Information

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2026, Chp. 104, Sec. 2, Subd. 06d

**Appropriation Language:** \$2,638,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever, Inc. to collaborate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Services, Board of Water and Soil Resources, and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to accelerate adoption of voluntary conservation practices on working lands in Minnesota by increasing technical assistance to farmers and landowners while also attracting federal matching funds.

**Appropriation End Date:** June 30, 2029



## Narrative

**Project Summary:** Provide technical assistance to support landowners and farmers in wildlife habitat, water quality and management activities. Leverage federal CREP funding to enhance ecosystem resilience and habitat connectivity amid environmental changes.

**Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.**

For thousands of years waves of fire crisscrossing Minnesota's landscape, followed by herds of Bison grazing the fresh green growth created the landscape we all call home. In 2025 we no longer have bison to carry tickseeds to new locations nor do we have abundant Henslow sparrows to carry bluestem seed, nor elk migrating south to Windom in search of new habitat. The job of terrestrial species migration now falls on our shoulders to ensure they can remain resilient to land use changes and extreme weather events.

Minnesota has several strategic conservation plans, including the MN Prairie Conservation Plan, Pheasant Plan, Duck Plan, and Watershed-Based Implementation Plan, to guide our efforts. These plans identify conservation needs and priority areas for outreach and technical assistance. To support these initiatives, BWSR has extended an agreement with the USDA to secure up to 75,000 acres of permanent Conservation Reserve Easement Program (CREP) within many of the priority areas outlined in these plans. With recent reductions in the federal workforce, the demand for professionals with this specialized knowledge is higher than ever. Now, the critical need is for on-the-ground implementation, working landowner by landowner, contract by contract, and acre by acre.

**What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.**

To place/retain 30 Pheasants Forever (PF) and Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) technical assistance staff to connect with Minnesotans creating resilient corridors of grasslands, forests, and wetlands within the agricultural matrix of Minnesota. Technical staff will work closely with BWSR on MN CREP outreach. Minnesota allocated \$34,000,000 of matching funds for MN CREP to leverage federal funds. Minnesota's allocation sunsets in 2029, creating urgency for their dispersal to reach BWSR's goal of 75,000 acres.

Habitat corridors cannot be created without buy-in from private landowners. In order to reach the largest audience of landowners we will also enroll/impact 69,000 acres of limited-term conservation programs. We are uniquely positioned to use our team of biologists to identify privately owned high-priority land and connect those landowners to local, state, and federal conservation programs.

To reach landowners staff will use digital and print media to create awareness of program funds and technical assistance services. The partners listed within this proposal will help reach out to their networks broadening the spectrum of potential landowners. In person outreach events will be utilized to bring individuals together to collaborate in innovative practices and disseminate specific program information and demonstrate in-field practices.

**What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?**

We will host over 110 outreach events promoting resilience of diverse wildlife populations and habitats, using technical assistance and conservation program enrollment. Outcomes include an impact on 69,000 acres of limited term conservation programs like CRP, EQIP, CSP, SWCD cost-share and other BWSR and U.S. FWS related programs. We will also increase enrollment of 9,000 acres in permanent easement programs like MN CREP. Additional impacts include improved wildlife habitat through prescribed burning, haying, and grazing, and enhanced water quality through targeted wetland restorations, filter strips, cover crops, and other soil health practices. All outcomes are scalable.

## Project Location

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?**

Statewide

**What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?**

Statewide

**When will the work impact occur?**

During the Project and In the Future

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Technical Assistance to Private Landowners

**Activity Budget:** \$1,055,200

**Activity Description:**

We provide expert technical assistance to landowners and farmers, guiding them toward proven strategies and conservation technologies that benefit the environment and natural resources. This support includes personalized site visits and direct landowner consultations to address their specific needs.

Our trained staff will engage with 2,920 landowners, equipping them with resources such as technical papers, fact sheets, social media broadcasts, invitations to field days, and other information about the conservation of natural resources. These efforts will support landowners in restoring diverse native habitats, whether through state or federal conservation programs or independent efforts. While some landowners may enroll in programs like CRP, RIM, MN CREP, WIA, MAWQCP, CSP, EQIP, or Prairie Bank, others will simply seek guidance technical assistance on implementing sustainable land management practices.

Beyond program enrollment, we focus on delivering high-quality technical support, sharing the latest research, and providing viable solutions to mitigate the impacts of changing weather patterns and land use. By fostering diverse wildlife and plant populations, we help landowners create resilient landscapes that benefit both their operations and the broader ecosystem. Through collaboration and education, we empower landowners to make informed decisions that contribute to long-term environmental stewardship.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Visit 700 sites and have 900 landowner contacts providing program and technical support	June 30, 2027
Visit 800 sites and have 1,120 landowner contacts providing program and technical support	June 30, 2028
Visit 700 sites and have 900 landowner contacts providing program and technical support	June 30, 2029
Hire/Retain 17 PF Farm Bill Biologists and Coordinating Wildlife Biologists to implement voluntary conservation.	June 30, 2029
Work with up to 12 SWCD partners to implement voluntary conservation through staff time.	June 30, 2029

### Activity 2: Habitat Corridor Conservation Plans

**Activity Budget:** \$1,055,200

**Activity Description:**

Staff under this proposal will work closely with private landowners to identify land and conservation practices that benefit vulnerable and sensitive species. They will develop tailored conservation plans designed to protect, restore, and enhance critical habitats, such as seed mixes that contain milkweed and other nectar producing plants for monarchs. Efforts will focus on leveraging BWSR's MN CREP and other permanent easement programs to enroll 9,000 acres in long-term conservation. Among the practices implemented are wetland restorations, and filter strips, which will work to improve water quality and water storage.

For landowners not interested in permanent easements, alternative limited-term conservation options will be offered, ensuring flexibility while promoting habitat stewardship. Overall, conservation efforts will impact 69,000 acres, with each plan incorporating habitat establishment or management strategies for targeted species of concern.

Ongoing monitoring will be essential to ensure the long-term resiliency and success of these conservation plans. By

tracking habitat conditions and species response, staff will adapt management strategies as needed, reinforcing the sustainability of conservation efforts.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Enroll 2,000 acres of Permanent Conservation Plans through state, federal and other easements.	June 30, 2027
Impact/Enroll 20,000 acres of limited-term & permanent Conservation Plans and Actions	June 30, 2027
Enroll 9,000 acres of Permanent Conservation Plans through state, federal and other easements.	June 30, 2029
Impact/Enroll 49,000 acres of limited-term & permanent Conservation Plans and Actions	June 30, 2029

**Activity 3: Promote the Importance of Diverse Terrestrial Wildlife and Plants**

**Activity Budget:** \$527,600

**Activity Description:**

Educating the public on the vital role of diverse wildlife populations and habitats is essential for both environmental sustainability and community well-being. This outreach will take multiple forms, including in-person and virtual events, as well as digital and print media, ensuring we reach a broad and diverse audience across Minnesota.

To engage communities effectively, staff will host pasture walks, live equipment demonstrations, nature and plant identification walks, and interactive booths at local fairs. Additionally, we will collaborate with conservation experts and influencers to bring awareness to rural Minnesota. Digital and print media will further amplify these efforts, helping disseminate the importance of biodiversity in maintaining a resilient landscape.

Through 110 outreach events, we will foster collaboration among landowners, farmers, and key stakeholders, promoting conservation practices that benefit Minnesota’s natural resources. These events will showcase the latest research and practical solutions for addressing challenges like changing weather patterns and land use shifts. Technical assistance and government programs—such as CRP, RIM, MN CREP, WIA, MNAWQCP, CSP, EQIP, and Prairie Bank—will be highlighted as tools to support habitat conservation and restoration efforts.

By combining education with action, we empower communities to contribute to a healthier, more resilient Minnesota.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
30 events and 200 digital/print media promoting diverse terrestrial wildlife, plants, and associated programs	June 30, 2027
50 events and 370 digital/print media promoting diverse terrestrial wildlife, plants, and associated programs	June 30, 2028
30 events and 250 digital/print media promoting diverse terrestrial wildlife, plants, and associated programs	June 30, 2029

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Kevin Roth	Board of Water and Soil Resources	BWSR will 1) maintain a position to coordinate with PF on the day-to-day operations, 2) assist PF in soliciting grant interest annually, 3) be involved in the hiring of staff, and 4) provide the partnership with the necessary tools, training, and information.	Yes
Greg Hoch	MN Department of Natural Resources	DNR will provide 1) technical guidance on habitat restoration, 2) training to staff, and 3) coordination with the MN Prairie Conservation Plan, the Pheasant and Duck Action Plans, and Wildlife Action Plan. DNR will coordinate with the Joint Ventures and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Midwest Landscape Initiative.	No
Ryan Galbreth	Natural Resources Conservation Service	NRCS will provide 1) access to federal program tools and delivery process, 2) access to the necessary tools, training, and information and technical certification as warranted, and 3) staff with appropriate technical leadership and other standards for conservation practices.	No
AnnMarie Krmpotich	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	U.S. FWS will provide 1) technical guidance to young professionals on habitat restoration, 2) collaboration with staff on projects within shared work areas.	No

## Dissemination

**Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.**

Dissemination will happen in multiple forms throughout the duration of this project. We will place the ENRTF logo on all our promotional materials relating to our outreach events, and meetings, hang a metal logo sign at the outreach events, tag ENRTF in social media posts, as well as giving credit to ENRTF within all written articles and interviews. As a requirement of the SWCD's receiving their subaward, they will also be given the same dissemination requirements and report back their efforts with written and pictorial examples.

## Long-Term Implementation and Funding

**Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?**

Partnership is in our title and shown in our list of supporters. We are asking for up to 50% of the funding needed to make these positions whole. Technical assistance to private landowners does not happen by one person or one agency, rather numerous groups coming together in a partnership. This scalable proposal brings together private companies, public agencies and non-government organizations combining resources for a resilient conservation approach. Future funding for these efforts will continue to come from this group and new partners who hear about our success and want to join forces for a positive impact in Minnesota.

## Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Minnesota Bee and Beneficial Species Habitat Enhancement II	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08a	\$876,000
Conservation Cooperative for Working Lands	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08k	\$2,611,000

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
MN Private Lands Manager		Supervision of staff and coordinate grant activities			31%	1.5		\$153,080
Private Lands Conservationists		Private Lands Conservationists located in USDA/SWCD Service Centers to provide technical assistance and planning support to private landowners on cost-effective strategies to restore diverse native habitat.			31%	25.5		\$1,912,657
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$2,065,737</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Board of Water and Soil Resources	Subaward	BWSR Easement Program Coordinators. Provide assistance in hiring, training, tracking, and reporting all project activities primarily for SWCD sub-awards, but also PF staff. This includes salary and benefits of 0.25 FTE over 3 years				0.75		\$75,000
Soil and Water Conservation District Staff	Subaward	Coordinate with up to 12 SWCD's to deliver activities and milestones listed in this proposal. Exact SWCD's chosen through RFP process. This includes salary and benefits of 0.12 FTE per SWCD over 3 years. Annual SWCD Budget's don't contain funding for these activities.				4.5		\$425,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Capital Equipment</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								

							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Personal mileage reimbursement over all PF positions per commissioners plan. Current rate of \$0.70 per mile will be used (subject to rate changes). 600 miles per year x 18 people for 3 years, totaling 32,400 miles.	When federal partner vehicles are not available, then personal vehicle use for site visits, monitoring, project implementation and outreach.					\$22,680
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Lodging for overnight stays for PF positions per commissioner's plan. An average of 3-4 nights per year per person equates to around 250 stays. Meals during work travel over PF positions per commissioner's plan. An average of 12 meals per year per person equates to around 864 meals.	Overnight stays and meals during work travel for trainings, meetings and work performed outside of normal work territory.					\$34,290
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$56,970</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
		Staff Training	Attend trainings/workshops may be hosted by, but not limited to: MN Soil Health Coalition, Grazing Lands Coalition, Pheasants Forever, SWCD's, BWSR, NRCS, SFA, and others; for the purpose of skill development and training for Job Approval Authority (JAA). \$900/PF staff costs are for registration fees charged by the hosting entity. Training topics to include, but are not limited to: grassland/forest establishment, grassland/forest management, state/federal program updates, soil health, cropping systems, conservation	X				\$15,293

			technology, and conservation related cohorts.					
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$15,293</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$2,638,000</b>

## Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Other Expenses		Staff Training	<p>Not all training events are free for staff. BWSR hosts an annual BWSR Academy geared for young professionals that costs \$225 for 3 days of training. This along with other SFA and Grazing Lands Coalition training events that are key to a well rounded professional onboarding process. We are asking for a waiver to be able to cover these registration fees for PF staff in order for them to get the training needed for their positions. These training are necessary to obtain and maintain the Job Approval Authority (JAA) certification through the NRCS. The JAA system ensures that local staff who provide technical services in Minnesota are qualified to plan, design, and implement conservation practices. Training topics to include, but are not limited to: grassland/forest establishment, grassland/forest management, state/federal program updates, soil health, cropping systems, conservation technology, and conservation related cohorts.</p>

## Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
<b>State</b>				
In-Kind	Board of Water and Soil Resources	Easement Stewardship Payments	Pending	\$154,800
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$154,800</b>
<b>Non-State</b>				
Cash	Natural Resource Conservation Service	Financial support for staff employment and associated expenses for position support. The anticipated federal match for positions support.	Pending	\$2,096,710
In-Kind	Natural Resource Conservation Service	In-kind office space, furniture, supplies, computer, network, IT, vehicle use, and associated expenses valued at \$7,400 per person per year. 18 spaces x 7,400 x 3 years.	Pending	\$399,600
In-Kind	Soil and Water Conservation Districts	In-kind office space, furniture, supplies, computer, network, IT, vehicle use, and associated expenses valued at \$7,400 per person per year. 12 spaces x 7,400 x 3 years (12%).	Pending	\$31,968
Cash	Partnership financial contributions from local Pheasants Forever chapters and SWCD's for staff time.	Financial support for PF staff and associated expenses for position.	Secured	\$331,500
Cash	General Mills	Financial support for staff and associated expenses for positions to implement the activities and milestones listed in this proposal.	Pending	\$900,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$3,759,778</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$3,914,578</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$6,552,578**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [5143adae-4e9.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Technical assistance given to landowners in the field and office. Graph showing when PF staff are in a county, the percentage of land enrolled in conservation programs is higher than counties without staff. Map of U.S. showing MN having 93,000 acres of land enrolled 3 times in CRP...

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
Secretary of State Good Standing	<a href="#">0db558b1-a7e.pdf</a>
990 EZ	<a href="#">adf04c52-219.pdf</a>
Audited Financial Statements	<a href="#">ccf99bc3-7ba.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
PF CEO Authorization Letter2	<a href="#">1f1f0a11-6d8.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

#### *Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other*

Title	File
Letter of Support - Duck Unlimited	<a href="#">51794c52-c1b.pdf</a>
Letter of Support - MASWCD	<a href="#">4a6c77c6-f03.pdf</a>
Letter of Support - BWSR	<a href="#">e2a00823-27c.pdf</a>
Letter of Support - Red Lake Watershed	<a href="#">aaec730f-a30.pdf</a>
Letter of Support - Monarch Joint Venture	<a href="#">a3d9aee3-6f4.pdf</a>
Letter of Support - General Mills	<a href="#">77a6d17f-593.docx</a>

## Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

### *Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage*

We received funding for 54% of our proposal amount. We are still able to meet the intent of the proposal, just on a smaller scale. The percentage reduction for each of the budgeted items is not a straight 46% cut across the board. We looked at each activity, each milestone, and each budgeted item to figure out how to deliver the most conservation with least disruption to the proposed intent of what the council recommended for funding.

The largest reduction of our budget was the subaward to the Soil & Water Conservation Districts. While still intending to work with 12 SWCD's, the duration of the subawards will be reduced. In coordination with BWSR, we reduced their subaward to 0.25 FTE over the three-year period.

To keep our partnership strong with our federal partners we will hire/retain 17 Pheasants Forever staff which is 70.8% of our initial proposal. Therefore, the budget for Private Lands Conservationists, miles/meals/lodging and staff training are all reduced to +/- 70.8% of the initial proposal.

We reduced enrollment of permanent conservation easements to 45% of our proposal amount. This significant reduction is because permanent conservation easements take significant time and landowner trust of the agency. With

less funds for staff time, there is less trust that can be developed to foster and grow the relationships that lead to enrollment of permanent conservation easements.

We reduced enrollment of limited-term conservation programs to 70% of our proposed amount. Limited-term conservation plans still require work to complete, but the landowner trust needed to complete them is less than permanent easements, therefore we can still accomplish more than our 54% of approved funding.

Outreach events, site visits and landowner contacts were all reduced down to 55% of our proposal amount.

In-kind non-ENRTF funding from NRCS as well as cash from NRCS was reduced to 70% of our proposed amount. In-kind non-ENRTF funding from SWCD was reduced to 24% of the proposed amount. Cash from non-state partnerships of Pheasants Forever chapters and SWCD's, and General Mills remained the same as communication with those partners did not indicate a reduction of support at this time. In-kind BWSR Easement stewardship payments also remained unchanged.

It is our goal to keep the intent of this proposal moving forward, we aim to achieve more than 54% in deliverables and mission.

## Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

**Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?**

N/A

**Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?**

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

**Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?**

No

**Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?**

N/A

**Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?**

N/A

**Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?**

No

**Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?**

No

**Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?**

No

**Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?**

No

**Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this project:**

Kevin Roth (BWSR), Maura Curry (Pheasants Forever), Sabin Adams (Pheasants Forever)

**Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements**

N/A