

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2011-2012 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

LCCMR ID: 074-C1+2

Project Title: Mississippi Bluffland Restoration

Category: C1+2. Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement

Total Project Budget: \$ \$200,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 2 yrs, July 2011 - June 2013

Other Non-State Funds: \$ 0

Summary:

Restore up to 180 acres of bluffland habitat by removing red cedar and other invasive species, benefiting wild turkeys and timber rattlesnakes.

Name: Dave Neu

Sponsoring Organization: National Wild Turkey Federation

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Location

Region: SE

Ecological Section: Paleozoic Plateau (222L)

County Name: Fillmore, Houston, Winona

City / Township:

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ Employment	_____ TOTAL _____%

2011-2012 MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: Mississippi Bluffland Restoration – National Wild Turkey Federation

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

This project provides focus and partnership by complimenting the existing Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) Blufflands Landscape project. LIP assists eligible, private landowners, who wish to voluntarily manage their land to benefit listed species (identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan), with the development of habitat management plans and financial assistance for habitat enhancement and restoration. Eastern red cedar and other invasive species are growing over former “goat prairies” in the blufflands, which destroys valuable habitat for wild turkeys, reptiles, small mammals and other wildlife. The project will focus on the population sustainability of the timber rattlesnake (*C. horridus*), three other at-risk snake species (racer, bullsnake, and hognose snake) and other numerous at-risk plant species in the Bluffland subsection of southeastern MN by removing red cedar and other invasive species on private and public lands.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Bluffland Restoration **Budget:** \$ 200,000

Restore up to 180 acres of “goat prairie” by removing red cedar and other invasive species, exposing native seed bank of prairie species to sunlight, and allowing those species to be rejuvenated.

The MN DNR conducts reptile surveys and habitat assessments on bluff prairies in the Blufflands subsection of SE Minnesota. Survey sites are selected based on an evaluation of Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS) native plant community survey data, topographic maps, and aerial photos for the presence of bluff prairies. The presence or absence of timber rattlesnakes is a secondary selection criteria. Rattlesnake presence or potential is based on evaluation of MCBS reptile survey data, timber rattlesnake observation reports maintained by the Nongame Wildlife Program, historical information from landowners and wildlife managers, and word of mouth reports. This process allows for targeting survey sites to bluff prairies in timber rattlesnake range. Sites are also selected for survey based on landowner permission for access. Once sites are selected and permission to access is attained, surveys are targeted for the month of May, which is peak emergence time for timber rattlesnakes. During site visits, the bluff prairies are surveyed for the presence of timber rattlesnakes and other reptiles. Sites are also evaluated for their habitat quality for timber rattlesnakes. In addition to reptile surveys, a plant inventory is conducted to document the presence of remnant bluff prairie, and an evaluation of restorability is also conducted, which includes an assessment of the cedar trees and invasive species present on the site. Once surveys are completed, sites are prioritized for restoration. Sites with timber rattlesnakes are of high priority, along with sites adjacent to bluffs with timber rattlesnakes. Once sites are prioritized, landowners are contacted for permission to conduct restoration work. This project only works with willing landowners. NWTF procures a 10 year agreement from participating landowners.

DNR and NWTF map the sites using GPS technology. Site-specific restoration plans are then developed and sent to prospective contractors by NWTF. Contractors bid on the sites, and are selected by NWTF. Contractor work is monitored by NWTF as work progresses. NWTF handles the contractor invoices, payments and reimbursement from the Trust Fund. Future

prescribed burning and follow-up invasive species work will be conducted by the MN DNR Nongame Wildlife Program, which is why they are a partner in identifying priority sites. This is done on project sites to rejuvenate the prairie plant species and keep out woody plant encroachment.

For this grant cycle, the MN DNR has recommended 11 landowners for habitat restoration based on the potential funds available. These landowners have not been approached to sign a landowner agreement to receive restoration work because funding has not yet been awarded. As a result, it is possible that one or more of these landowners will not be interested in entering an agreement with NWTF to have restoration work completed. If that happens, NWTF will work with the MN DNR to identify replacement priority sites and those landowners will be contacted to determine interest in the program. Additionally, if a new site is discovered by the MN DNR that far exceeds currently identified sites, consideration will be given to changing the priority list for landowner contacts and enrollment in the program.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Restore up to 180 acres of Bluffland Prairie habitat by hiring contractors to remove red cedar and other invasive species	June 30, 2013

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

The MN DNR Nongame Wildlife Program is a project partner. The DNR representative for this partnership is Jaime Edwards, Nongame Wildlife Specialist. As a project partner, the MN DNR will conduct surveys and habitat assessments of bluff prairies in the Blufflands subsection of SE Minnesota. Sites eligible for restoration will be prioritized based on the survey and assessment data. The MN DNR will work with NWTF to recommend priority sites for restoration as part of this grant project. Restoration of recommended sites will work toward meeting goals laid out in the State Wildlife Action Plan and the Minnesota Timber Rattlesnake Recovery Plan.

In addition to identifying priority sites, the MN DNR will also provide technical assistance to the NWTF on restoration needs, including bid specification review for compliance with management guidelines outlined in the Timber Rattlesnake Recovery Plan. MN DNR will also be available to private landowners receiving restoration work for consultation on habitat and management goals and implementation.

B. Timeline Requirements

We propose a two year grant beginning July 1, 2011 and ending on June 30, 2013

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

Bluffland restoration is a long-term effort by DNR, NWTF and private landowners in SE MN. Several grants and outreach programs have been and continue to be used to restore this rare and valuable habitat. Each restored site will not be revisited with these grant funds, but future potential sites are continuously being sought and found.

2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget

IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET 2 years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Personnel: NWTF Regional Biologist - salary and travel expenses to administer both projects. Approximately 10% of the full-time employment. Approximately 60% salary, 40% expenses.	\$ 20,000
Contracts: Contrator to remove red cedar and other invasive species	\$ 180,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST	\$ 200,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: DNR LIP program	Unknown at this time	Pending
Funding History: ENRTF appropriations	\$ 190,000	

Landowner	County	Township	Range	Section
State of Minnesota	Winona	105	5	31
State of Minnesota	Houston	103	7	24
State of Minnesota	Houston	103	5	19
Girl Scout Camp	Houston	103	7	30
Griggs	Houston	103	7	3
Jameson	Fillmore	102	8	1
Skauge	Houston	102	7	8
Thorson	Houston	103	6	7
Halverson	Houston	102	7	5
Meyer	Houston	103	7	2
Scheu	Houston	104	5	16

Project Manager – Dave Neu – Mr. Neu graduated with B.S. in Biology and Wildlife Management from University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in 1984. During 1987 through 2000, Mr. Neu has worked as a Fisheries Technician, Wildlife Technician, and Senior Wildlife Biologist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Currently he is serving as the NWTF Senior Regional Wildlife Biologist for Wisconsin, Minnesota, Upper Michigan and Manitoba. He is a Certified Wildlife Biologist as recognized by The Wildlife Society.

For this project, Mr. Neu will be coordinating the field activities, hiring contractors, ordering materials, performing site inspections of contractors, paying bills, securing reimbursements, and completing periodic reports.

About the NWTF

The NWTF is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with more than 500,000 members in 50 states, Canada, Mexico and 14 other foreign countries. It supports scientific wildlife management on public, private and corporate lands as well as wild turkey hunting as a traditional North American sport.

In 1973, the National Wild Turkey Federation was founded in Fredericksburg, Virginia. At that time, there were an estimated 1.3 million wild turkeys and 1.5 million turkey hunters. Shortly after its founding, the NWTF moved to Edgefield, S.C., where it is headquartered today.

Thanks to the work of federal, state and provincial wildlife agencies and the NWTF's many volunteers and partners, there are now more than 7 million wild turkeys and nearly 3 million turkey hunters. Turkey hunting has become the fastest growing form of hunting and has the second-highest number of participants of any type of hunting.

Since 1985, more than 279 million NWTF and cooperator dollars have been spent on upholding hunting traditions and conserving more than 13.9 million acres of wildlife habitat. Hunters have also benefited as the NWTF has worked tirelessly to support our hunting heritage and protect and promote laws that increase hunting opportunity and safety.