

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

---

**LCCMR ID: 110-D**

**Project Title:** Minnesota's Critical Lands - Acquisition, Restoration & Research

---

**Category:** D. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

---

**Total Project Budget: \$** \$2,650,000

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 3 yrs, July 2011 - June 2014

**Other Non-State Funds: \$** 0

---

**Summary:**

Acquire critical habitat, 480 acres; restore prairie, 400 acres; native habitat enhancement, 10,000 acres; initiate/inventory invasives management, 375,000 acres; research prairie management effects on diversity, carbon sequestration, water storage.

---

**Name:** Richard Johnson

**Sponsoring Organization:** The Nature Conservancy

**Address:** 1101 W River Pkwy, Ste 200  
Minneapolis MN 55415

**Telephone Number:** 612-331-0770

**Email** rich\_johnson@tnc.org

**Web Address** www.nature.org

---

**Location**

**Region:** NW, Central, Metro, SW, SE

**Ecological Section:** Western Superior Uplands (212K), No. Minnesota Drift and Lake Plains (212N), Paleozoic Plateau (222L), Minnesota and NE Iowa Morainal (222M), Lake Agassiz, Aspen Parklands (223N), Red River Valley (251A), North Central Glaciated Plains (251B)

**County Name:** Anoka, Beltrami, Chippewa, Clay, Cottonwood, Crow Wing, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Kittson, Lac qui Parle, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Marshall, Morrison, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Roseau, Swift, Traverse, Wabasha

**City / Township:** Multiple

---

_____ 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: Minnesota's Critical Lands – Acquisition, Restoration & Research

### I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The Statewide Conservation & Preservation Plan (SCPP) identifies habitat issues as the “...most important issues facing the conservation and preservation of natural resources throughout Minnesota.” The plan identifies four strategic areas to be addressed: 1) Critical Land Protection, 2) Land and Water Restoration and Protection, 3) Sustainable Practice, and 4) Knowledge Infrastructure. The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) proposal acts in each of these areas.

Critical Land Protection - ~480 acres of currently unprotected land with high quality habitat will be protected by fee or easement acquisition by TNC. These lands will be managed by TNC or transferred to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) if appropriate.

Land and Water Restoration and Protection - ~400 acres of converted land will be restored to prairie. Native habitat will be enhanced on an additional ~10,000 acres. This proposal also provides for a greatly expanded effort to address one of the key threats identified in the SCPP, degradation of habitat due to invasive species. ~375,000 acres will be surveyed to identify invasive occurrences, apply appropriate management where possible, and share data with the appropriate land managers. All of this work will be done on TNC or public lands.

Sustainable Practice & Knowledge Infrastructure - Public and private groups have made significant investments in protecting and restoring prairie habitats. There is a critical need for research into the effectiveness of different management techniques at ensuring the long-term sustainability of these lands and waters. This research will provide important results for TNC, DNR, and partners on the effectiveness of traditional prairie management techniques, how to adapt these techniques, and development of new innovative approaches. Results will be shared with partners and published, if appropriate.

Data from the County Biological Survey (CBS) and TNC's *Conservation by Design* process will be used to identify the most critical locations for acquisition, restoration and research. Work will focus on lands and waters in areas with high biodiversity significance located within larger areas of existing public and private conservation investments.

### II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

#### Activity 1: Protect Sites of Biodiversity Significance

**Budget: \$1,500,000**

TNC will acquire fee title to ~480 acres of land with Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) in one or several blocks. Priorities will be identified using CBS and TNC data on biodiversity significance and sustainability. Land acquired will be held by TNC and/or DNR. Acquisitions staffing will be provided by TNC's protection staff. For additional information, see the 2011-2012 Acquisition List.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Fee or easement acquisition of ~480 acres of high quality habitat	2/28/2014

#### Activity 2: Restore & Enhance Native Habitat

**Budget: \$850,000**

~400 acres of converted lands on TNC's Wallace Dayton Preserve in the Tallgrass Aspen Parkland will be restored to prairie using best practices and seeds/plants of the local ecotype.

Enhancement activities will be completed on an additional ~10,000 acres of degraded lands at ~15 TNC preserves, ~6 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) and ~3 Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA). These will be in critical conservation areas, including: Lake Alexander, Ordway/Glacial Lakes, Prairie Coteau, Upper Minnesota River, and Weaver Dunes. Activities include prescribed burns, invasives & woody vegetation monitoring & control, rotational grazing, site preparation/seed harvest/sowing, and

monitoring. Some of the land involved in these activities may also be leased for grazing. Any lease income would be reinvested into conservation activities at those sites.

TNC will work with partners to inventory invasive species on ~375,000 acres of habitat at ~10 TNC preserves in the Beach Ridges and ~40 WMAs in the Karlstad, Roseau River, Thief Lake, Thief River Falls and Crookston work areas. Activities include identifying & mapping invasive sources, inventorying & databasing occurrences, mechanical and/or chemical treatment, and sharing results with partners. Work in the Beach Ridges will focus on treating reed canarygrass and trefoil. Work on the WMAs will focus on inventorying with treatment as time and resources allow.

Restoration, enhancement and invasive activities will be carried out by TNC staff, Minnesota Conservation Corps, and/or contractors. Work on each project will be guided by ecological restorations plans including timetables, long term management needs, and verification that local, native ecotypes are being used for all plantings. Projects will be reviewed by TNC science staff to ensure that the best available science and techniques are being applied.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. ~400 acres of prairie restoration	12/31/ 2013
2. ~10,000 acres of prairie, forest, etc. enhancement	12/31/2013
3. ~375,000 acres of invasives inventory and management where possible	2/28/2014

**Activity 3: Research Adaptive Management Techniques**

**Budget: \$300,000**

This study will compare the effect of management practices on prairie structure and composition across 12,000 acres of TNC and partner land. It will focus on the effect of fire, grazing, and chemical controls on vegetation, carbon sequestration & water retention. Goals include: 1) Developing innovative & simple ways of assessing carbon & water storage, 2) Providing baseline data for future research, 3) Sharing new practices. The broad scope of this project allows us to identify broad patterns so lessons learned can be applied to new areas. Activities include vegetation, soil, carbon & water monitoring, and preparing & publishing results. TNC will be coordinating this work with US Fish & Wildlife, DNR and other partners through the Grassland Monitoring Team.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. Develop and pilot assessment protocols	12/31/2011
2. Complete report and share results with Grassland Monitoring Team	12/31/2013

**III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

**A. Project Team/Partners**

This project will involve cooperation with divisions of the DNR, including Ecological Resources (SNA & CBS) and Fish and Wildlife (WMA). TNC will coordinate acquisition, restoration and research work with our partners in these divisions. This cooperation will not involve the exchange of funds. These efforts are complementary not redundant; all accomplishments on joint projects would be prorated.

**B. Timeline Requirements**

Three years (July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2014) are requested to provide multiple field seasons for development work and to allow time for preparing and distributing results.

**C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs**

TNC’s long-term goal is to protect and restore biologically and economically viable landscapes capable of sustaining Minnesota’s biodiversity. Protection at this scale requires the efforts of both public and private landowners. In areas of critical habitat, however, formal protection and ongoing management may be needed. Activities 1 and 2 include acquisition and restoration. These lands will require periodic ongoing management. Funding for long-term management is secured through a variety of sources including income from TNC’s stewardship endowment. Additional funding will be secured from future private and public fundraising efforts and may include future requests to the ENRTF.

## 2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget - Minnesota's Critical Lands

### IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
<b>Personnel:</b> Staff are classified as regular if working > 26 weeks/year, seasonal if < 26 weeks. Sal = Salary, Ben = Benefits. The figures offered below include overtime when deemed necessary and approved by supervisors.	
<i>Preserve Management Assistant:</i> 6.0 FTE, Regular, 73% Sal, 27% Ben; 2.8 FTE, Seasonal, 89% Sal, 11% Ben	222,000
<i>Research Field Technician:</i> 6.4 FTE, Seasonal, 89% Sal, 11% Ben	180,000
<i>Grassland Assistant Manager:</i> 2.5 FTE, Regular, 73% Sal, 27% Ben	130,000
<i>Range Technician:</i> 2.5 FTE, Regular, 73% Sal, 27% Ben	73,000
<i>Vegetation Technician:</i> 1.3 FTE, Seasonal, 89% Sal, 11% Ben	42,000
<i>Restoration Management Assistant:</i> 1.3 FTE, Seasonal, 89% Sal, 11% Ben	30,000
<i>Stewardship Ecologist:</i> 1.0 FTE, Seasonal, 89% Sal, 11% Ben	13,000
<i>Staffing for Acquisition Projects:</i> TNC staff time directly spent contacting, negotiating, closing projects identified on project list. Work to be done by Dir. of Habitat Protection, Land Protection Specialists and Conservation Information Managers (0.7 FTE, Regular, 73% Sal, 27% Ben).	42,000
<i>Staffing for Project Coordination:</i> TNC staff time spent coordinating and reporting on work under this grant. Work to be done by a Conservation Information Manager (0.3 FTE, Regular, 73% Sal, 27% Ben).	15,000
	<b>\$ 747,000</b>
<b>Contracts:</b>	
<i>Professional/Technical</i> - Fees related to acquisition projects (\$42K); Analyzing prairie research samples (\$24K). Contractor TBD.	66,000
<i>Other</i> - Contract for prescribed fire, brush control, weed treatment with MCC or other contractor (\$20K). Contractor TBD.	20,000
	<b>\$ 86,000</b>
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies:</b>	
<i>Equipment Purchases:</i> Carbide cutter for woody brush/invasives control (\$40K); ATVs & trailers for field work at project locations (\$33.5K); Seed drill for native prairie planting (\$21K); Truck for travel to project locations (\$20K); Other (\$1K)	115,500
<i>Equipment Leases:</i> Trucks for travel to project locations & field work (\$73.5K)	73,500
<i>Fuel:</i> Fuel for project equipment (\$52.5K)	52,500
<i>Seed for Restoration:</i> Native prairie seed (\$100K)	100,000
<i>Vegetation Control:</i> Spraying chemicals & supplies (\$26.3K); Hand tools (\$4.5K)	30,800
<i>Other:</i> Research monitoring supplies (\$14.6K); GPS (\$2.5K); Misc. supplies < \$1K incl. tools, hardware, monitoring supplies, etc. (\$7.2K)	24,300
	<b>\$ 396,600</b>
<b>Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):</b> 480 acres to be held by The Nature Conservancy or MN DNR if appropriate	<b>\$ 1,415,200</b>
<b>Travel:</b> In-state travel essential to completing project activities	<b>\$ 3,200</b>
<b>Additional Budget Items:</b> Sample handling (\$1K); Print forms & reports (\$1K)	<b>\$ 2,000</b>
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT &amp; NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST</b>	<b>\$ 2,650,000</b>

### V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
<b>Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> Private funds to be raised by the Conservancy.	\$ 400,000	Pending
<b>Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> None	\$ -	NA
<b>In-kind Services During Project Period:</b> Allowable costs for existing TNC staff working directly on approved projects and unrecovered indirect costs.	\$ 350,000	Pending
<b>Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation:</b> 2009 - \$358,252; 2010 HCP 6.5 - \$210,000 pending; 2010 Reconnecting Prairie - \$380,000 pending.	\$ 948,252	Unspent & Pending
<b>Funding History:</b> Past ENRTF Spending: 2005 - \$350,000; 2007 - \$430,000; 2008 - \$317,000; 2009 - \$6,748. Past Other Funds Spending: 2005 - \$555,144; 2007 - \$360,747; 2008 - \$340,062; 2009 - \$5,964.	\$ 1,103,748	Spent

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

**Project Title:** Minnesota's Critical Lands - Acquisition, Restoration & Research

**Project Manager Name:** Rich Johnson

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund \$ Request:** \$2,650,000

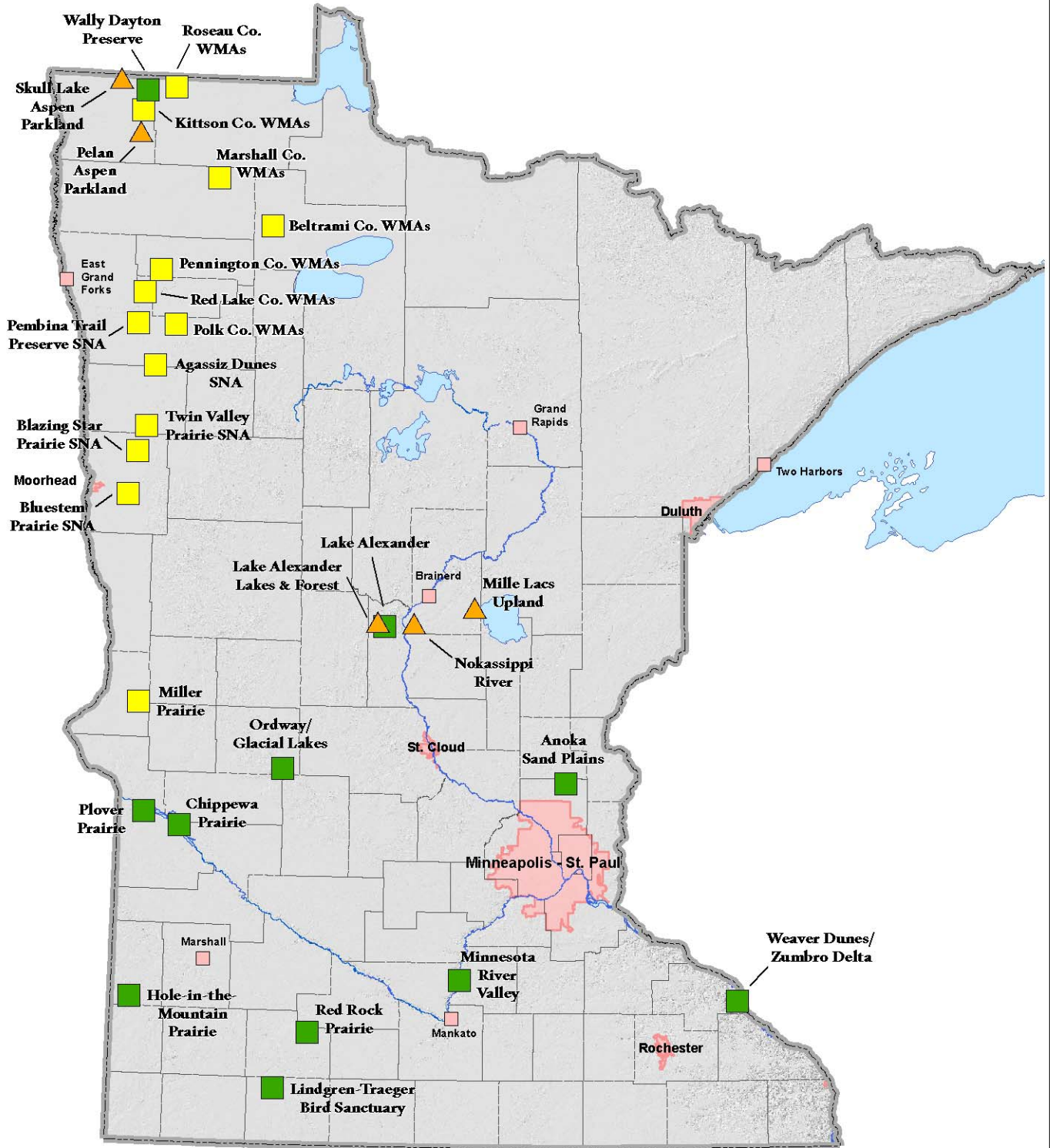
**Final Title Holder(s):** The Nature Conservancy or the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (administered by the Scientific and Natural Area or the Wildlife Management Area programs)

#	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
1	Lake Alexander Lakes & Forests	Fee	Morrison	115			384525	5111446
2	Mille Lacs Uplands - Parcel 1	Fee	Crow Wing	310			432947	5126422
3	Mille Lacs Uplands - Parcel 2	Fee	Crow Wing	275			432947	5126422
4	Nokassippi River	Fee	Crow Wing	590			403586	5116848
5	Pelan Aspen Parkland	Fee	Kittson	1000			245790	5396895
6	Skull Lake Aspen Parkland	Fee	Kittson	1000			226556	5426821

**NOTES:** Proposed projects are identified based on data on critical resources from the County Biological Survey and TNC's Conservation by Design planning process. Approval by TNC science staff is required before any site is acquired. Please note that these are a list of potential projects -- completion of these acquisitions is dependent on successful negotiation with the landowners and availability of funding. More projects are listed than budget allocated in order to plan for the possibility that some projects may not come to fruition. Therefore, the total acreage included in the above list exceeds the total acres to be acquired pursuant to this grant. In addition, additional projects that meet the strategic objectives of the proposal may be added via submission of a project list amendment.

# Minnesota's Critical Lands - Acquisition, Restoration & Research

The Nature Conservancy Potential Project List  
Submitted April, 2010



\*Please note that these are potential projects and just because a project is listed does not mean it will be completed. All restoration projects are done on Conservancy lands or public lands. Projects not on this map that meet the strategic objectives of the Partnership may be added. More projects are listed than budget allocated to plan for the possibility that some projects may not come to fruition.

- ▲ Activity 1 - Acquisition Project
- Activity 2 - Restoration Project
- Activity 2 - Invasives Inventory & Management
- ◆ Activity 3 - Research Project (Location to be determined)

  
 The Nature Conservancy  
 "Working with Nature"

  
 0 15 30 60 Miles  
Map Created by: RCJ, TNC & MN-ND-SD, 2010/4/6  
 Photo: © 2010 Project WCC/BRI  
 LCCMR 2011 Project Map v.1.0

## **Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description:**

This project to protect Minnesota's Critical Lands will be managed on behalf of The Nature Conservancy by Rich Johnson. Rich is Conservation Information Manager for the Minnesota Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. In this role, he supports conservation planning, fee and easement acquisition projects, and coordinates the Chapter's GIS programs. Rich has worked for The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota for more than 6 years. Prior to his current position, he served as GIS Projects Manager for Fidelity National Information Solutions, managing a team developing innovative GIS services for the insurance and real-estate markets. Rich holds a bachelor's degree in History from St. Olaf College and a Masters in History from the University of Minnesota.

The Nature Conservancy's mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

The Nature Conservancy was founded in 1951, and we have protected more than 117 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of rivers worldwide. We work in all 50 states, and in more than 30 countries protecting habitats from grasslands to coral reefs. We address threats to conservation involving climate change, fire, fresh water, forests, invasive species, and marine ecosystems. We use a science-based approach, and we pursue non-confrontational, pragmatic solutions to conservation challenges. We partner with indigenous communities, businesses, governments, multilateral institutions, other non-profits, and individuals.

The Nature Conservancy recently completed our celebration of 50 years of conservation success in Minnesota. The Nature Conservancy currently owns and manages 56 preserves in Minnesota, encompassing more than 70,000 acres. We have conserved more than 300,000 acres in the state. We have more than 23,000 members in Minnesota.

