# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
# 2014 Request for Proposals (RFP)

**Project Title:** **ENRTF ID:** **107-D**

Invasive Species Control in Grassland Habitats

**Category:** D. Aquatic and Terrestrial Invasive Species

**Total Project Budget: $** 892,000

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 2 Years, July 2014 - June 2016

**Summary:**

Invasive species in critical habitats identified in the Minnesota Prairie Plan will be managed on 80,000 acres through inventory, direct control (herbicide and fire treatments) and habitat reconstruction.

**Name:** Brian Winter

**Sponsoring Organization:** The Nature Conservancy

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**Location**

**Region:** Central, Northwest, Southwest, Southeast

**County Name:** Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Pipestone, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Roseau, Sherburne, Stearns, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, Wabasha, Wilkin, Yellow Medicine

**City / Township:**

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

**PROJECT TITLE: Invasive Species Control in Grassland Habitats**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

**This project provides for a greatly expanded effort to address one of the primary threats to grassland and wetland habitats identified in Minnesota's Prairie Plan-degradation of habitat by invasive species. This proposal is consistent with the recent "strong emphasis" that the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) intends to place on invasive species. In addition, the LCCMR Six-Year Strategic Plan recognizes the threat invasive species pose to habitat protection. In that plan it is very clear that invasive species are one of the key issues that must be addressed to protect and conserve Minnesota's natural resources. Wetlands are being invaded by reed canary grass, purple loosestrife and many other species while grasslands are degraded by leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, cool season non-native grasses, common buckthorn and many other species. In addition, there are emerging invasive species threats including teasel, yellow star-thistle, salt cedar, hound's tongue, and Dalmatian toadflax. Though these emerging invasive species have not yet been problem species in Minnesota, they have recently been found here. Early detection and eradication are critical for preventing them from spreading and impacting our natural areas. A fully integrated invasive species control program is critically needed to enhance and protect the remaining grassland and wetland habitats of Minnesota. Our focus will be on the core native prairie landscapes identified in the Minnesota Prairie Plan (http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/mcbs/mn_prairie_conservation_plan.pdf; Map 3, page 22) along with the critical corridors that connect these important habitat complexes (Map 6, page 28). We plan to focus 80% of our invasive species work within those core native prairie landscapes mapped by the Minnesota County Biological Survey and the critical connecting corridors as identified within the Minnesota Prairie Plan. The remaining 20% of our work will take place on unique grassland resources not included in the Minnesota Prairie Plan, primarily in southeastern Minnesota.**

**II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

**Activity 1: Grassland Enhancement** **Budget:** $892,000

**Native habitat will be enhanced on 80,000 acres. These acres will be located in 9 core grassland landscapes (Aspen Parkland, Glacial Ridge, Syre Prairie, Felton Prairie, Bluestem Prairie, Lac qui Parle Prairie, Hole in the Mountain, Glacial Lakes, and Kellogg-Weaver Dunes Prairies) identified in the Minnesota Prairie Plan. The Conservancy is uniquely positioned to accelerate invasive species control across these critical grassland project areas with our existing stewardship office structure. The four Conservancy office locations identified on the project map are well distributed across the critical grassland region. Full time Conservancy Land Stewards in each office will complete the work by hiring new invasive control technicians and contractors with expertise in grassland management. Enhancement of critical habitats will be accomplished by inventorying of focus areas to locate invasive occurrences and applying appropriate control strategies to new and established infestations on both private and public lands. We anticipate that this work will be done on 32,000 acres of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Management Areas, 12,000 acres on Scientific and Natural Areas, 1,000 acres on State Parks; and 31,000 acres of The Nature Conservancy preserves, 1,000 acres of Fish and Wildlife Service property and 3,000**

**acres of private land. Data gleaned from the project will be shared with appropriate land managers. Control strategies will include direct control measures using chemical and biological treatments; prescribed fire will be used to enhance native species vigor and directly control some invasive species; and in worst case situations where complete elimination of an invasive species dominated habitat is necessary, habitat reconstruction will be implemented by reseeding with native species following control treatments. Work on each project will be guided by ecological restoration plans including timetables, long term management needs, and verification that local, native ecotypes are being used for all plantings. Projects will be reviewed by the Conservancy Prairie Ecologist to ensure that the best available science and techniques are being applied. Evaluation of invasive species control efforts will be critical to future efforts and this project will benefit from the Conservancy Prairie Ecologist's oversight and hiring of an Invasive Stewardship Ecologist to assist with invasive inventories and evaluation of control efforts.**

| Outcome | Completion Date |
|---|---|
| 1. 49,000 acres of direct invasive species inventory and control | June 30, 2016 |
| *2.* 30,400 acres of habitat enhancement with prescribed fire | June 30, 2016 |
| 3. 600 acres of habitat reconstruction with seeding of native species | June 30, 2016 |

**III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

**A. Project Team/Partners**

**The Nature Conservancy will be responsible for completing this project through the hiring and supervision of short-term seasonal land management staff and the employment of contractors such as Conservation Corps Minnesota. Seasonal staff and contractors will be supervised by existing full time Conservancy Land Stewardship Staff who have great skill, knowledge and certifications in invasive species control and prescribed fire. Project goals will be reached by working cooperatively with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on the management of Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific and Natural Areas, and State Park Land, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service on Waterfowl Production Areas and National Wildlife Refuge land and private landowners when necessary for project implementation. Cooperation will not involve the exchange of funds.**

**B. Timeline Requirements**

**Two Years (July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2016) are requested to provide multiple field seasons for inventory and follow-up control work.**

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

**The Nature Conservancy's long-term goal with this project is to enhance grassland and wetland habitats identified as critical areas within the Minnesota Prairie Plan. It is essential that invasive species control programs are ongoing to achieve lasting habitat enhancement. Sustaining this invasive control project will be accomplished by both private and public fundraising, and may include additional requests in future years of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. By accelerating invasive work for several years in core grassland landscapes it is our hope that future invasive work load in those critical grassland areas will be reduced to the point that existing staff capacity can manage the invasive species threat.**

# 2014 Detailed Project Budget

**Project Title: Invasive Species Control In Grassland Habitats**

## IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 2 years

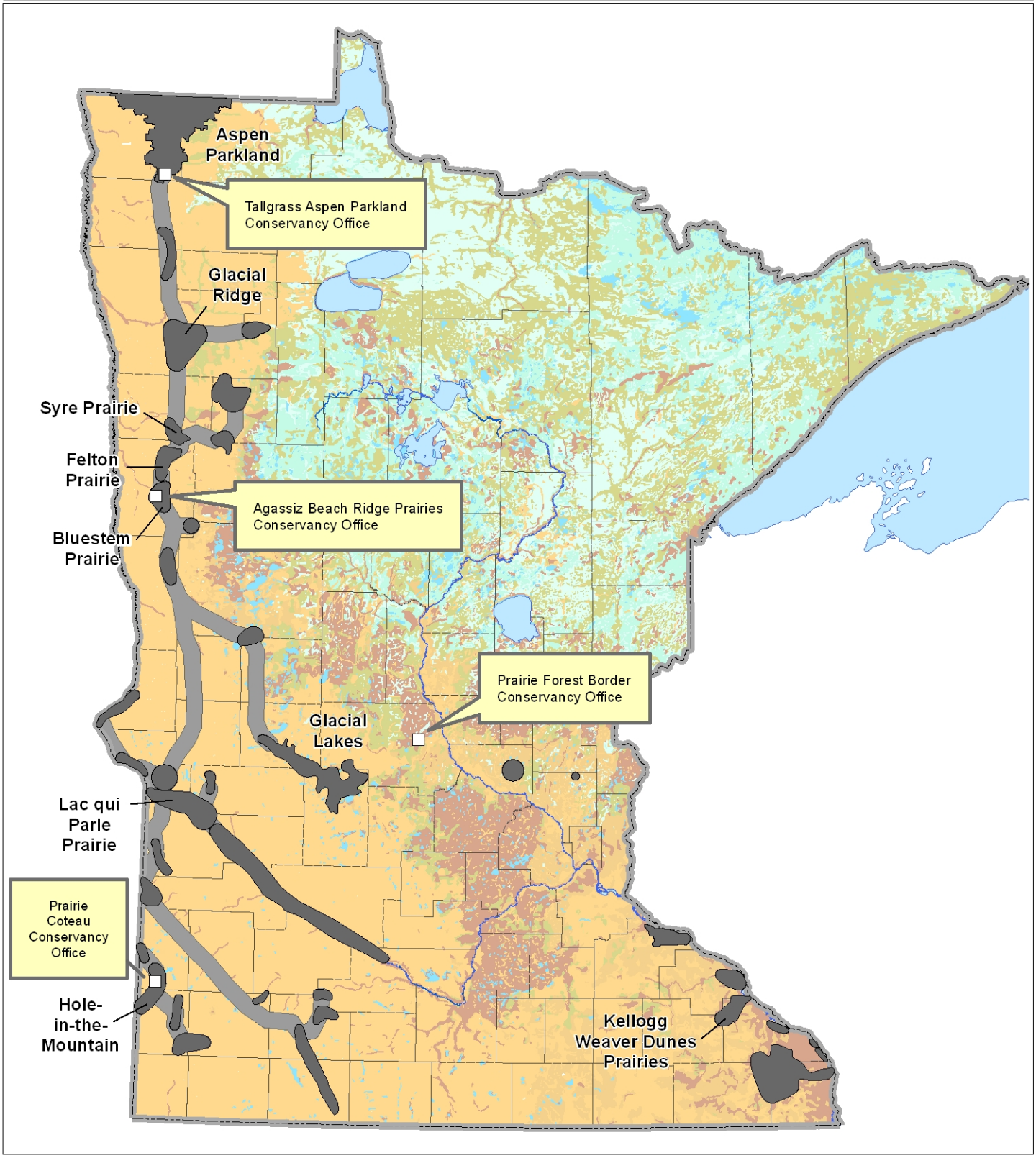
| BUDGET ITEM | AMOUNT |
|---|---|
| **Personnel:** All positions will be new seasonal The Nature Conservancy (TNC) staff except where noted. Staff are considered as "regular" if working > 26 weeks/year, "seasonal" if < 26 weeks. Sal = Salary, Ben = Benefits. The figures offered below include overtime when deemed necessary and approved by supervisors. | **$ 465,000** |
| Invasive Management Assistant (70% Sal. 30% Regular Ben; 50% empl; 6 positions/year * 2 years) | 171,000 |
| Fire Crew Tech(89% Sal. 11% Seasonal Ben; 11% empl; 20 positions/year * 2 years) | 145,000 |
| Invasive Management Tech (89% Sal. 11% Seasonal Ben; 26% empl; 7 positions/year * 2 years) | 104,000 |
| Stewardship Interns (89% Sal. 11% Seasonal Ben; 23% empl; 2 positions/year * 2 years) | 24,000 |
| Invasive Species Ecologist(89% Sal. 11% Seasonal Ben; 19% empl; 1 position/year * 2 years) | 11,000 |
| Prairie Ecologist (70% Sal. 30% Ben; 6% empl; 1 position/year * 2 years) (current TNC Employee) | 10,000 |
| **Contracts:** Contracts with companies that can provide invasive species control specialists. These contracts are yet to be determined but must be able to provide invasive species inventory, herbicide treatment, vegetation mowing, prescribed burning, seed collection and all around vegetation managment expertise. | **$ 280,000** |
| **Equipment/Tools/Supplies:** | **$ 102,000** |
| Tools and Supplies: Purchase of backpack sprayers, ATV sprayers, brushcutters, GPS/PDA combo units and personal protection equipment for herbicide application. | 49,000 |
| Fuel: Fuel for tractor for the project | 4,000 |
| Vegetation Control: Purchase chemicals and invasive species control products. Herbicides will be selected based on best available information at time of control project. | 23,000 |
| Other: Funds for repairs and maintenance of project equipment (both new equipment purchased with project funds and existing TNC equipment, i.e. ATVs, sprayers, tractors, mowers and fire | 26,000 |
| **Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):** | **NA** |
| **Travel:** | **$ 45,000** |
| In state travel for TNC vehicles used to complete invasive species control projects (80,000 miles @ $0.555/mile per year over 2 years). Mileage logs will be used to track grant-related miles. | 45,000 |
| **Additional Budget Items:** | **NA** |
| **TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND $ REQUEST =** | **$ 892,000** |

## V. OTHER FUNDS

| SOURCE OF FUNDS | AMOUNT | Status |
|---|---|---|
| **Other Non-State $ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:** TNC will contribute cash match to cover TNC staff time ($98,000). | $ 98,000 | Secured |
| **Other State $ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:** | NA | |
| **In-kind Services During Project Period:** TNC will also contribute privately-raised funds in the form of unrecovered indirect costs using the Conservancy's federally approved negotiated indirect cost recovery rate of 18% of total project cost totalling $160,000. | $ 160,000 | Secured |
| **Remaining $ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable):** | | |
| **Funding History:** This is a new MN Prairie Plan focused project on the threat of invasive species. TNC has received ENRTF funding, primarily thorugh the Habitat Corridors Partnership as follows: Past ENRTF Spending: 2005 - $350,000; 2007 - $430,000; 2008 - $317,000; 2009 - $364,662, 2010 - $164,000. Past Other Funds Spending: 2005 - $555,144; 2007 - $360,747; 2008 - $340,062; 2009 - $473,940; 2010 - $54,285. | $ - | |

# Invasive Species Control in Grassland

## The Nature Conservancy - June, 2013




Prairie Landscapes (From MN Biological Survey)

Prairie Corridor (From 2010 Prairie Plan)

☐ Invasive Species Control Staff Locations

Background: Vegetation at Settlement, Marschner, 1974

N W E S

0 12.5 25 50 Miles

Map Created by: RCJ, TNC in MN-ND-SD, 2013/6/5
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LCCMR FY14 - Stewardship RFP - 201306.mxd

The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.

## Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description:

This project to protect Minnesota's Critical Lands will be managed on behalf of The Nature Conservancy by Brian Winter. Brian is a Program Director for The Nature Conservancy for the grassland region. Brian's office is located in western Minnesota near the town of Moorhead. In this role, he supports conservation projects and stewardship of critical habitats across the grassland region. Brian has worked for The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota for more than 28 years. Prior to his current position, Brian worked as Director of Stewardship and Land Steward for The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota. Brian holds an associate degree in Natural Resources Management from the University of Minnesota, Crookston and a bachelor's degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology from South Dakota State University. Brian also has his master's degree in Animal Ecology from Iowa State University.

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

The Nature Conservancy was founded in 1951, and we have protected nearly 120 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of rivers worldwide. We work in all 50 states, and in more than 35 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.

Since 1958, The Nature Conservancy has protected more than 650,000 acres of Minnesota's forests, prairies, rivers, lakes and wetlands. We currently manage 57 preserves across the state, encompassing more than 72,000 acres. We have more than 23,000 members in Minnesota.