

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

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 179-G

Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

Category: G. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Total Project Budget: \$ 5,153,680

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 Years, July 2014 - June 2017

Summary:

This project will protect 1200-acres of native prairie with Prairie Bank easements, apply management to 910-acres of prairie, and landowner stewardship will be encouraged through workshops, technical assistance and planning.

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Sponsoring Organization: MN DNR

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St. Paul MN 55155-4025

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Web Address _____

Location

Region: Central, Southwest, Southeast

County Name: Big Stone, Chippewa, Fillmore, Houston, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Murray, Pipestone, Pope, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Swift, Winona, 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: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Almost half of Minnesota’s 235,000 acres of remaining native prairie is not formally protected, meaning it’s in the hands of private landowners. The MN Prairie Conservation Plan now provides a coordination framework for all conservation partners to pursue the protection all remaining native prairie over the next 20 years – this project is one of those efforts. This project aims to work with landowners of native prairie sites identified by the MN Biological Survey (MBS) 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 1200 acres of 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 910 acres of NPBs and high priority private prairie lands threatened by human impacts, invasive species, and lack of natural disturbance regimes.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: NPB Acquisition of Prairie of Biodiversity Significance Budget: \$4,722,972

The SNA Program will protect and buffer native prairie sites of biodiversity significance by acquisition of NPB conservation easements on 1200 acres. NPB conservation easement baseline reports will be completed on all (about 17) sites acquired through these funds, as well as funding established for long-term stewardship. Priority sites are identified by MBS 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). Priority will also be given to sites that contribute to implementation of the MN Prairie Plan. 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 40 of the 1200 acres acquired will need restoration.

| Outcome | Completion Date |
|---|-----------------|
| 1a. acquisition of NPB conservation easement 1200 acres of native prairie | 6/30/17 |
| 1b. baseline property reports for aquired NPB easements | 6/30/17 |
| 1c. long-term stewardship of acquired easements | 6/30/17 |
| 1d. accelerated landowner outreach for NPB enrollment | 6/30/17 |

Activity 2: Native Prairie Restoration & Enhancement Budget: \$338,024

Restoration and enhancement activities would be completed on about 910 acres at up to about 18 NPBs and 5 native prairie stewardship sites. Management practices at 10 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, Conservation Corps MN (CCM), Sentence to Service (STS), volunteers, and/or contractors. Activities include seed collection, planting, exotics control, woody encroachment removal, boundary signing, site cleanup, prescribed burns/mowing, and monitoring. All restorations will use seeds/plants of a local ecotype, collected from onsite or within the Seed Zone. 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. 40 acres of prairie reconstruction (restoration) | 6/30/17 |
| 2b. 120 acres of woody removal & exotics species treatment | 6/30/17 |
| 2c. 750 acres of prescribed burns | 6/30/17 |



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| | |
|---|---------|
| 2d. NPB easement boundary signs & development work to meet minimum standards on 17 NPB sites (including those acquired with this funding) | 6/30/17 |
| 2e. adaptive management monitoring on 10 NPB sites | 6/30/17 |

Activity 3: Native Prairie Landowner Assistance & Incentives

Budget: \$92,684

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 15 landowners will receive a comprehensive prairie stewardship plan including an evaluation their prairie’s condition, identification of management needs, and recommendations for management action.

| Outcome | Completion Date |
|---|------------------------|
| 3a. 4 workshops/field days for prairie landowners & practitioners | 6/30/17 |
| 3b. consultations, guidance, mgmt. asst., etc. to 20 landowners | 6/30/17 |
| 3c. prairie stewardship plans provided to 15 prairie landowners | 6/30/17 |

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

This proposal includes the DNR’s work and funding to be used by the SNA program towards partnership project work on NPB’s and other native prairie stewardship lands being submitted as separate, but coordinated LCCMR projects. This includes work with The Nature Conservancy and DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife. These efforts are complementary not redundant; all accomplishments on joint projects would be prorated.

B. Timeline Requirements

Three years (July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017) 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 1a and 1b will start immediately upon receiving funds, while work on the other activities will start after comparable funds from the 2013 Prairie Stewardship and Native Prairie Bank Acquisition 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 20-25 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, are included in reports submitted to LCCMR 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).

2014 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

| <u>BUDGET ITEM</u> (See "Guidance on Allowable Expenses", p. 13) | <u>AMOUNT</u> |
|--|---------------------|
| Personnel: ~ 2.5 FTE for direct project activities spread across ~12 classified & unclassified staff paid almost exclusively through special project funds, including ~15-20% fringe benefits as per state union contracts: 0.25 FTE Acquisition and management coordinators (\$56.5K) 3.0 FTE specialist, technician (\$585K) 1.0 FTE laborers & seasonal crews (\$120K) | \$761,500 |
| Contracts: Professional/technical: for deliverables including NPB easement baseline property reports & monitoring, adaptive management monitoring, private prairie stewardship plans, and partner assistance in landowner outreach | \$125,000 |
| Professional Services: Direct and Necessary Services required to support this appropriation | \$153,680 |
| Equipment/Tools/Supplies: e.g. fencing, signs, PPE, other field tools, etc. | \$17,000 |
| Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements): DNR Native Prairie Bank conservation easement acquisition (1200 acres) including real estate transaction costs, and establishing long-term easement stewardship funding | \$4,074,500 |
| Travel: DNR fleet charges (for operation of trucks, cars, tractors, and other specialized equipment) & instate travel costs (as per state contracts) | \$22,000 |
| TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST = | \$ 5,153,680 |

V. OTHER FUNDS

| <u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u> | <u>AMOUNT</u> | <u>Status</u> |
|---|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: | \$ - | |
| Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: No other state funds are proposed; if any activities are split funded their accomplishment acres will be pro-rated. | \$ - | |
| 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 (if applicable): BALANCES AS OF 5/06/13: 2011 Prairie Stewardship and Native Prairie Bank Acquisition (\$1M) - Balance: \$161K encumbered, \$475 unobligated; 2013 Prairie Stewardship and Native Prairie Bank Acquisition (\$750K) - <i>not appropriated at the time of this proposal</i> | \$ 475,000 | unobligated - see notes to left |
| Funding History: ENRTF 2010 SNA-Native Prairie (SNA total=\$1.175M, NPB/private prairie=\$471.7K) ENRTF 2010 HCP 6.5 (SNA total=\$63K, NPB/private prairie=\$31.7K) ENRTF 2011 Prairie Stewardship and NPB Acq (\$1M) ENRTF 2013 Prairie Stewardship and NPB Acq (\$750K) LSOHC 2010 Accelerated Prairie (SNA total=\$929.6K, NPB/private prairie=\$464.8K) LSOHC 2011 Accelerated Prairie (SNA total=\$457.9K, NPB/private prairie=\$228.9K) LSOHC 2013 Accelerated Prairie (SNA total=\$461K, NPB/private prairie=\$108K) | \$ - | |

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2014 Proposed Acquisition/Restoration List**

Project Title: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition
Project Manager Name: Jason Garms
ENRTF \$ Request: \$5,153,680

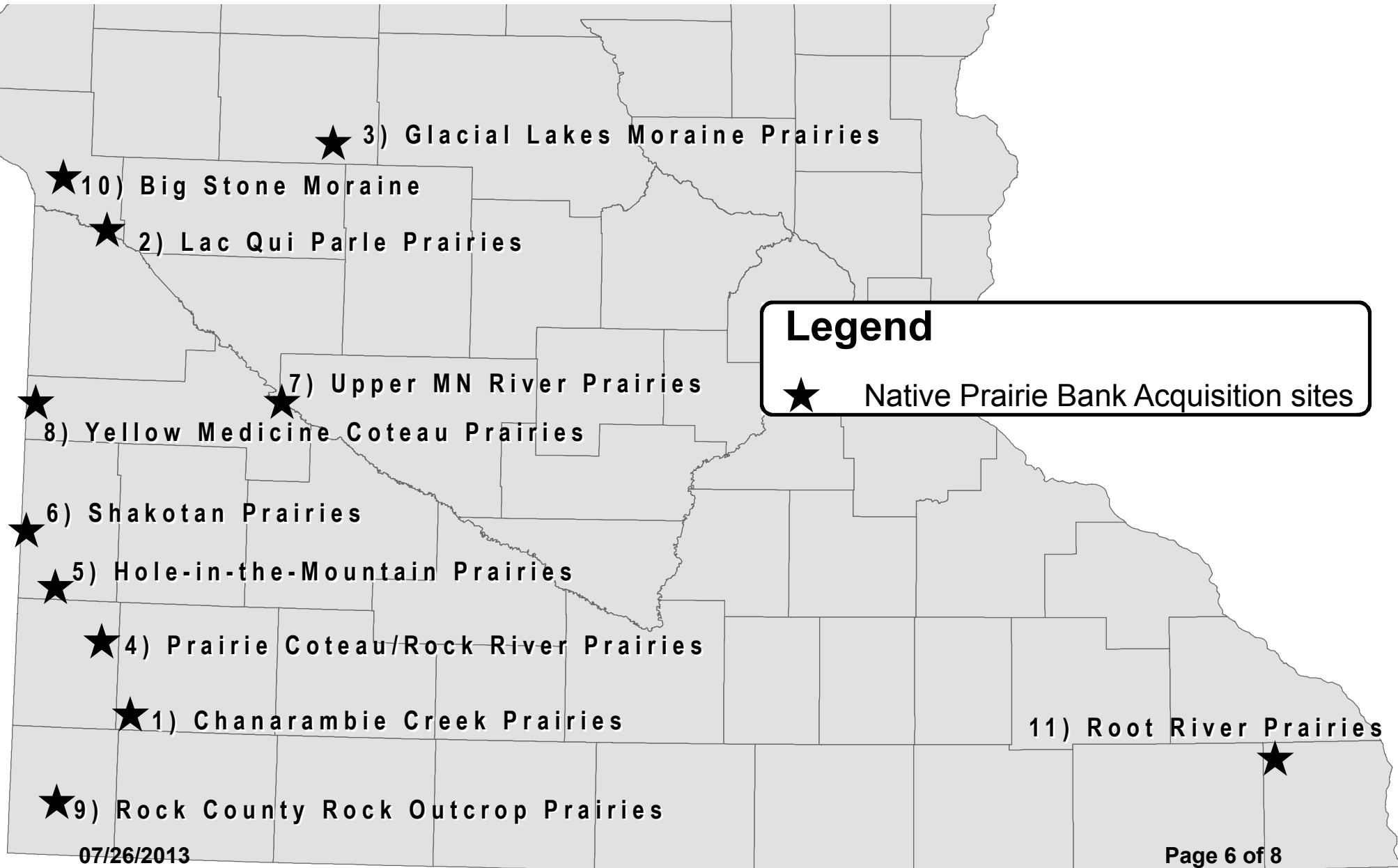
| # | Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name | Geographic Coordinates Format: [Deg.] [Min.] [Sec.] [Hemis.] | | County | Estimated Cost | Ecological Significance | Activity Description | # of Acres | # of Shoreline Miles | Type of Landowner | Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable) |
|----|--|--|-----------|--|----------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| | | Latitude | Longitude | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Chanarambie Creek Prairies | 258042 | 4866495 | Murray, Pipestone | \$2950/ac | Dry gravel, mesic & wet prairies in biggest grassland complex with the highest quality prairie parcels in SW MN | Conservation easement acquisition | 80 | | Private | DNR-SNA |
| 2 | Lac Qui Parle Prairies | 243928 | 5016740 | Big Stone, Lac Que Parle | \$2550/ac | Next to existing DNR and TNC protected native prairies, part of a large macro site with many native prairie tracts; expands habitat for many rare butterfly and bird species, as well as Prairie Chickens | Conservation easement acquisition | 200 | | Private | DNR-SNA |
| 3 | Glacial Lakes & Moraine Prairie | 307591 | 5043821 | Pope, Kandiyohi, Swift | \$2350/ac | Dry sand-gravel prairies of the Alexandria Moraine, provides habitat for the Threatened Dakota Skipper as well as the Poweshiek Skipper and Regal Fritillary | Conservation easement acquisition | 150 | | Private | DNR-SNA |
| 4 | Prairie Coteau/Rock River Prairies | 247827 | 4889918 | Pipestone | \$3000/ac | Dry hill prairie, prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite, expands habitat around the Prairie Coteau SNA | Conservation easement acquisition | 150 | | Private | DNR-SNA |
| 5 | Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairies | 235087 | 4899918 | Pipestone, Lincoln | \$3000/ac | Dry hill prairie, prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite, expands habitat around existing TNC and DNR lands | Conservation easement acquisition | 150 | | Private | DNR-SNA |
| 6 | Shakotan Prairies | 226839 | 4919942 | Lincoln | \$2900/ac | Dry hill prairie, prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite | Conservation easement acquisition | 150 | | Private | DNR-SNA |
| 7 | Upper MN River Prairies | 299289 | 4963870 | Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Renville, Redwood | \$3600/ac | MN River native prairie including oak savanna, wet prairie, rock outcrops; expands habitat for many rare plants, butterflies and birds | Conservation easement acquisition | 200 | | Private | DNR-SNA |
| 8 | Yellow Medicine Coteau Prairie | 232251 | 4957954 | Yellow Medicine | \$2900/ac | Dry hill prairie, prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite, expands habitat for Western White Prairie Clover and Upland Sandpiper | Conservation easement acquisition | 200 | | Private | DNR-SNA |
| 9 | Rock County Rock Outcrop Prairies | 236510 | 4848531 | Rock | \$3850/Ac | Mesic to wet prairie with rock outcrops; provides habitat for many rare rock outcrop plants | Conservation easement acquisition | 80 | | Private | DNR-SNA |
| 10 | Big Stone Moraine | 221725 | 5033661 | Big Stone | \$2300/ac | Prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite, | Conservation easement acquisition | 200 | | Private | DNR-SNA |
| 11 | Root River Prairies | 599661 | 4851588 | Houston, Filmore, Winona | \$3100/ac | Southern Dry Bedrock Bluff (goat) prairies in a complex of bluff prairies and cold streams; habitat for timber rattlesnakes | Conservation easement acquisition | 25 | | Private | DNR-SNA |

NOTES: The above list represents locations with identified native prairies and interested landowners. This proposal will target these locations and enroll 1200 acres; not all sites on the list will be enrolled. Parcel Names are named Prairie Core Areas identified in the 2010 MN Prairie Conservation Plan (except: Rock County Rock Outcrop Prairies). Restoration parcels are the acquisition parcels listed above. Exact where the restorations will occur will be determined after negotiating each easement. Completed restorations will be reported in work program updates. Parcel lists for woody removal, exotics treatment and prescribed burning/disturbance projects are not known at this time and will be reported in work program updates.

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Map Location Indicator

Numbers correlate with numbers on acquisition list



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 administrating 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 LCCMR projects, including:

- 2003 Forest & Prairie Stewardship on Public and Private Lands
- 2005, 2007 Prairie Stewardship of Private Lands
- 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 Habitat Corridors Partnership
- 2008 Accelerated Prairie Management, Survey, Acquisition and Evaluation
- 2011 Native Prairie Stewardship and Native Prairie Bank Acquisition

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.

Organization Description

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Ecological & Water Resources, Scientific & Natural Areas Program

Charged under MS 86A.05 to protect and perpetuate in and undisturbed natural state those natural features that possess exceptional scientific or education value; and under MS 84.96 and 84.961 to acquire Native Prairie Bank easements and work with landowners in conserving native prairie.

