

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

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 182-G

VanderWert Scientific and Natural Area and County Park

Category: G. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Total Project Budget: \$ 455,000

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

Summary:

Purchase Martin Countys only Prairie Bush Clover prairie, protect it by designating it as a scientific and natural area, buffer it and add it to the county park system.

Name: Rich Perrine

Sponsoring Organization: Fox Lake Conservation League, Inc.

Address: Box 212
Sherburn MN 56171

Telephone Number: (507) 236-1965

Email richard.perrine@mn.nacdnet.net

Web Address

Location

Region: Southwest

County Name: Martin

City / Township: Cedar Township

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



PROJECT TITLE: VanderWert Scientific and Natural Area and County Park

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

This project will protect the only *Lespedeza leptostachya* (Prairie Bush Clover) population that has been identified in Martin County. The Doyle VanderWert prairie remnant also holds the most diverse riparian, mesic and dry hillside native prairie habitat remaining in the county. The site is vulnerable to conversion to other uses and non-native species are starting to encroach into the remnant from the edges. Doyle will donate the 3.7 acres enrolled in CREP which is planted entirely with seed collected from his adjacent prairie remnant. He is finally willing to part with a total of 40 acres to make our project feasible. This project is needed now!

Acquisition of the 10 acre prairie remnant as a county scientific and natural area will protect it from land use change. Proper management of the remnant and establishing a native buffer around it will help to maintain its native plant diversity. Water quality improvement is a goal to be addressed by planting some of the steepest highly erodible cropland along both sides of this 1/3 mile of meandering creek to native vegetation to provide a buffer. Below this site, the land levels off and this unnamed tributary flows into Cedar Lake within ¼ mile.

Making the site available to the public will provide recreation and educational opportunities. The site is within approximately 2 miles of a public school which will allow it to be utilized for field trips. Currently Biology/Science class field trips utilize a DNR WMA located 4 miles south of this site, which does not have native prairie, only prairie restorations with low diversity. Through public ownership, establishing a plan for the site and implementing the plan will lead to the realization of this project’s goals, including habitat protection and restoration, recreation and education and water quality improvement.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Acquisition of prairie remnant and buffer area

Budget: \$410,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Develop a purchase agreement with the landowner.	March 1, 2015
2. Have the Title reviewed and complete a boundary survey of the parcel.	March 1, 2015
3. Purchase of the parcel by the Fox Lake Conservation League.	June 1, 2015
4. Transfer the property to Martin County as an addition to the County Park System.	June 1, 2015

Activity 2: Vegetation Management

Budget: \$15,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Develop a vegetation management plan for the entire park.	March 1, 2016
2. Remove non-native species and replace them with local ecotype native prairie species.	June 15, 2017
3. Establish local ecotype native prairie species adjacent to the prairie remnant.	June 25, 2017

Activity 3: Develop a plan for access and management of the park

Budget: \$30,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Complete and implement a development and management plan for the park.	March 1, 2016
2. Install a public access for the park and a trail around the native prairie remnant.	June 15, 2017



III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

The project team includes the applicant, the Fox Lake Conservation League, a local organization that has purchased several parcels that are now State WMAs and Federal Waterfowl Production Areas. The organization's current President is Tim Eisenmenger, the Treasurer is Jim Miller, and the Grant Manager is Doug Hartke. The Fox Lake Conservation League has a very strong base of volunteers. The Martin Soil and Water Conservation District is providing assistance with developing a conservation/management plan and establishing native vegetation on the parcel. The Martin County Park Board and the Martin County Board of Commissioners will provide long term protection of this valuable gem of a prairie remnant and work with the other partners in expanding prairie vegetation over the rest of the site. Other partners expected to continue to provide their in-kind time and services for on the ground activities include, student groups, FFA members, 4-H club members, Scouts, conservation club members, and DNR staff for guidance. Only the Fox Lake Conservation League will receive funds directly from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

B. Timeline Requirements

The property purchase is expected to be completed within 12 months of the project start. The remaining project planning and the work of removing non-native species and replacing them with local ecotype native plants will be completed within the next 24 months following acquisition. Establishing the buffer area, creating a trail around the prairie remnant, and establishing a public access will also be completed within the same 24 month period. No additional funding beyond this request is anticipated to be needed to complete any future work on the project.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

Long term protection will be provided by designating the prairie remnant as a county scientific and natural area as part of the county park system. A buffer area immediately surrounding the remnant will be planted to local ecotype native prairie as part of this project. Additional buffer will continue to be added in future years as local source seed and plant materials become available from the site and nearby native remnants to expand the restoration.

Until prairie restoration can be completed, the cropland to the north and south of the remnant and the buffer established through this project will continue to be cropped, with the income going to continue the work of restoring prairie on the balance of the parcel.

This site has served as a seed source for many species that are just beginning to become established on protected conservation easements and native buffer sites. Now is the time to protect and manage this incredible site for future generations to enjoy and learn from.

This project adds to the many areas of existing protected habitat (CREP, RIM, WMAs) just to the south in Elm Creek Township. It also adds to the natural riparian forested Cedar-Hanson County Park located at the north end of Cedar Lake.

2014 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: VanderWert Scientific and Natural Area and County Park

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel: N/A	\$ -
Contracts: Construction firm (possibly Martin County Highway Department) to install the public access and a trail around the native prairie remnant	\$ 20,000
Contracts: Martin SWCD to assist with project development and seeding	\$ 20,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Chemical to remove invasive species	\$ 5,000
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements): 40 acres, Martin County (Parks)	\$ 410,000
Travel: N/A	\$ -
Additional Budget Items: N/A	\$ -
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 455,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: N/A	\$ -	
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: N/A	\$ -	
In-kind Services During Project Period: Volunteer time assisting with invasive species removal, seed collection, and planting	\$ 20,000	Secured
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable): N/A	\$ -	
Funding History: N/A	\$ -	

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

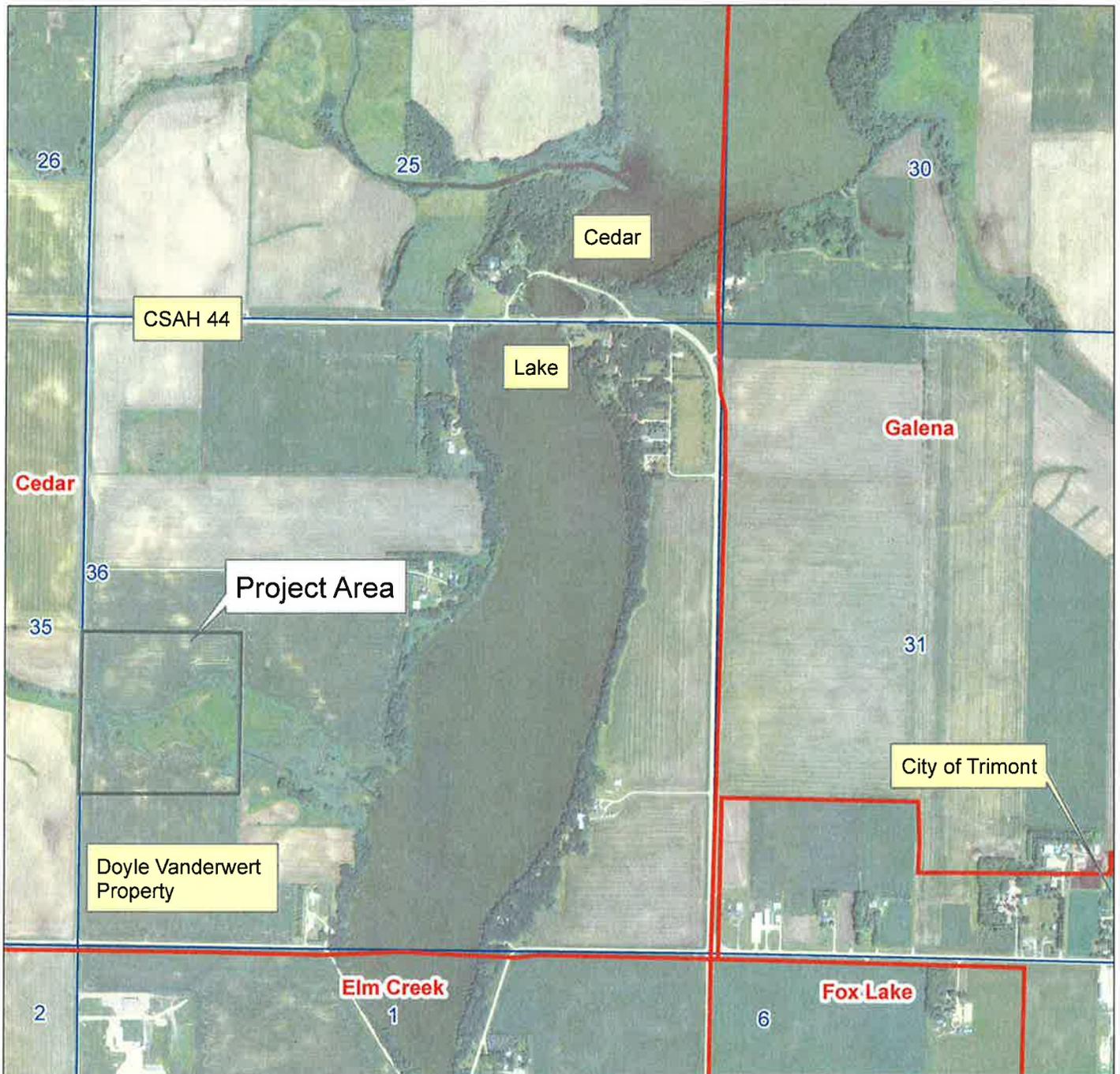
Project Title: VanderWert Scientific and Natural Area and County Park

Project Manager Name: Rich Perrine

ENRTF \$ Request: \$455,000

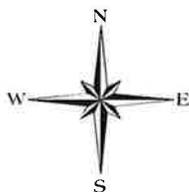
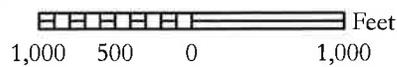
#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates Format: [Deg.]° [Min.]' [Sec.]" [Hemis.]		County	Estimated Cost	Ecological Significance	Activity Description	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles	Type of Landowner	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)
		Latitude	Longitude								
1	Doyle VanderWert parcel	43° 46' 0.458" N	94° 45' 0.119" W	Martin	\$455,000	Prairie with Federal Threatened, State Endangered Species	Acquisition, restoration, recreation	40	none	private, retired farmer	Martin County (Parks)
NOTES:											

VanderWert Scientific and Natural Area and County Park



-  Civil Townships
-  Sections

1:15,000



2014 Main Proposal, Project Title: VanderWert Scientific and Natural Area and County Park

Project Manager Qualifications

Rich Perrine, project manager, has over 25 years of natural resource management experience. He worked for the U. S. Forest Service out of the Gunflint Ranger District in northeast Minnesota in the mid 70's and has worked for Soil and Water Conservation Districts for most of the last 25 years out of the Martin, Watonwan, and Carver offices. He has been back in the Martin SWCD office for the last 15 years, after serving as a DNR CREP Technician for Cottonwood, Watonwan and Martin SWCDs.

He has written and assisted with many successful natural resource implementation grants, Re-leaf Minnesota, DNR Partners and Conservation Partners Legacy grants. He has administered several of these and has been a partner for implementing many of them. He has received and effectively administered a private stewardship grant through the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a Metropolitan Council water quality implementation grant project, two prairie habitat restoration grants through LCCMR/ENRTF and BWSR CWMA and Native Buffer grants.

While working with Martin SWCD, he has written over one hundred conservation plans for the "Restoration of Rare and Declining Habitats Tallgrass Prairie / Oak Savanna" practice. He provides technical assistance for wetland restoration projects and has supervised the installation of over 50 wetland restoration projects over the past few years, providing recommendations for local ecotype native plant materials for the wetland basins, riparian areas and upland habitats.

He is up to date on current methods by participating in recent trainings. He has attended native prairie seedling identification and native prairie propagation workshops at the Iowa Ecotype project headquarters at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls. He attended a hands-on Lake Habitat Protection and Lakeshore Restoration workshop, sponsored by the Minnesota Chapter of American Fisheries Society which was taught by experienced MN Pollution Control Agency staff, MN Department of Natural Resources staff and others.

Organization Description

The Fox Lake Conservation League, Inc. is a 501 C (3) organization and has a charitable gambling license which provides funding to support and provide matching dollars for projects. In 2012 over \$100,000 in donations were provided toward 44 different projects. Our focus is on habitat restoration and land acquisition for wildlife habitat, but donations are provided for a wide variety of youth and civic activities. The League has completed two major habitat acquisition projects since 2005. A \$600,000 Pierce Lake parcel was purchased and sold to the USF&WS for a WPA and more recently a \$700,000 parcel purchase added acres to the Four Corners WMA. We are currently working on two acquisitions through the CPL Grant Program. Both have been purchased, which has drained our cash reserves, and we are in the process of completing the final documents to receive reimbursement for the purchases. We will expect to provide some cash and/or in-kind match toward this current project as well. Our Board consists of 15 members and we work closely with all conservation groups in the Martin County area, calling ourselves the "Martin County Alliance". We try to hold a joint meeting at least twice a year.

