

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2015 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 138-G

Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

Category: G. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Total Project Budget: \$ 6,450,162

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 years, July 2015 - June 2018

Summary:

This project will enroll 1350-acres in Native Prairie Bank easements, apply management to 1000-acres of prairie, encourage landowner stewardship through workshops, technical assistance and planning, and conduct conservation grazing research.

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Sponsoring Organization: MN DNR

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Location

Region: Central, NW, SW, SE

County Name: Statewide

City / Township:

Alternate Text for Visual:

Potential Native Prairie Bank easements can be found through the southwest, northwest, and southeast portions of the state.

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



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

2015 Main Proposal

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PROJECT TITLE: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Of Minnesota’s 235,000 acres of remaining native prairie, about 100,000 acres has no form of protection. At the same time, the Midwest experiencing the highest rate of grassland-to-cropland conversion seen since the 1920’s. The MN Prairie Conservation Plan now provides a road map for all 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 1350 acres of native prairie will be permanently protected by the DNR’s Native Prairie Bank (NPB) conservation easement program. The current landowner “waiting list” for NPB includes 75 projects for over 6000 acres. Native prairie restoration and enhancement activities will be implemented on about 1000 acres of NPBs threatened by invasive species and lack of natural disturbance regimes. This project will also conduct research on conservation grazing as a form of disturbance ecology for managing the structure and diversity of grassland habitats. This research will help land managers develop specific management practices applicable to Minnesota’s grassland types.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: NPB Acquisition of Prairie of Biodiversity Significance Budget: \$5,777,029

The SNA Program will protect and buffer high quality native prairie sites of by acquisition of NPB conservation easements on 1350 acres. Payment rates are formula based, which is 65% of the marginal agricultural land rate as established by BWSR (M.S. 84.96). These rates are updated annually and reflect current land values within a given township. Conservation easement baseline reports will be completed on all (about 18) sites acquired through these funds, as well as funding for monitoring. 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). Any 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 1350 acres acquired will need restoration.

Outcome	Completion Date
1a. acquisition of NPB conservation easement 1350 acres of native prairie	6/30/18
1b. baseline property reports for acquired NPB easements	6/30/18
1c. monitoring and stewardship of acquired easements	6/30/18
1d. accelerated landowner outreach for NPB enrollment	6/30/18

Activity 2: Native Prairie Restoration & Enhancement Budget: \$388,151

Restoration and enhancement activities would be completed on about 1000 acres. Management practices at 10 NPB sites would be measured to evaluate if objectives were met as part of adaptive management. 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)	6/30/18
2b. 125 acres of woody removal & exotics species treatment	6/30/18



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2c. 835 acres of prescribed burns	6/30/18
2d. NPB easement boundary signs & development work to meet minimum standards on 18 NPB sites (including those acquired with this funding)	6/30/18
2e. adaptive management monitoring on 10 NPB sites	6/30/18

Activity 3: Native Prairie Landowner Assistance & Incentives

Budget: \$127,751

Private landowners will increase their stewardship of native prairie through a suite of strategies. Six prairie management workshops/field days for private landowners and other practitioners will be held. DNR staff will meet with 40 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. 6 workshops/field days for prairie landowners & practitioners	6/30/18
3b. consultations, guidance, mgmt. asst., etc. to 40 landowners	6/30/18
3c. prairie stewardship plans provided to 15 prairie landowners	6/30/18

Activity 4: Conduct research on conservation grazing

Budget: 157,231

This activity will fund one graduate student under Dr. Todd Arnold at the University of Minnesota to conduct research on different conservation grazing strategies. Specific research questions include the effects of stocking rate, timing and duration of grazing for managing Minnesota’s grassland habitats. The outcome will be specific BMPs for conservation grazing to meet a range of conservation objectives.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Hire grad. student, conduct research, analyze results	6/30/18
2. Develop and disseminate grazing BMP’s	6/30/18

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

The Local Technical Teams (LTT’s) formed by the MN Prairie Conservation Plan will assist with developing landowner relationships and initiating projects (these organizations will not receive). LTT memberships including representation from USFWS, DNR, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, TNC, The Conservation Fund, Audubon, NRCS, and SWCD’s – to name a few. The University of Minnesota will assist in selecting a graduate student and developing a research project (will receive funds via contract).

B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy

This proposal supports the MN Prairie Conservation Plan’s 25-year strategies for protection, restoration and enhancement, as well as research and monitoring. The EWR 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 program could utilize ENRTF support of \$4M to \$8M per biennium for Native Prairie Bank easements and stewardship over the next 20 years. DNR incurs a number of one-time costs upon acquisition of a conservation easement including preparation of a baseline report, as well as recurring costs for periodic monitoring. Fiscal requirements for long-term stewardship of DNR’s conservation easements are included in reports submitted to LCCMR (ML 2008, Chap. 367, Sec. 2, Subd. 5(h)).

C. Timeline Requirements

Three years (July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2018) is requested to provide multiple field seasons for the planning and implementation of activities 2 and 3. Three years is also needed complete the steps necessary in activity 1 - seeing projects through from landowner negotiations to closing the easements.

2015 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: 4.5 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: 0.5 FTE Acquisition and management coordinators (\$105K) 3.6 FTE specialist, technician (\$702K) 1.0 FTE laborers & seasonal crews (\$120K)	\$927,000
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. Service contracts: prescribed burning, woody removal - including CCM	\$245,100
Professional Services: DNR's direct and necessary costs pay for activities that are directly related to and necessary for accomplishing appropriated programs/projects. In addition to itemized costs captured in our proposal budget, direct and necessary costs cover HR Support (~\$20,288), Safety Support (~\$5,018), Financial Support (~\$9,880), Communication Support (~\$4,564), IT Support (~\$31,367), Planning Support (~\$2,816), Procurement Support (~\$940), and division and regional program management (~\$35,188) that are necessary to accomplishing funded programs/projects.	\$110,062
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: e.g. fencing, signs, PPE, other field tools, etc.	\$30,000
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements): 1350 acres of DNR Native Prairie Bank conservation easement acquisition (~\$4,652,500) including real estate transaction costs (~\$168K), and establishing long-term easement stewardship funding (~\$270K)	\$5,090,500
Travel: DNR fleet charges (for operation of trucks, cars, tractors, and other specialized equipment) & instate travel costs (as per state contracts)	\$47,500
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$6,450,162

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)	\$ -	
Funding History: (2010-2014) ENRTF 2010 SNA-Native Prairie (NPB/private prairie=\$471.7K) ENRTF 2010 HCP 6.5 (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 (NPB portion=\$464.8K) LSOHC 2011 Accelerated Prairie (NPB portion=\$228.9K) LSOHC 2013 Accelerated Prairie (NPB portion=\$108K) LSOHC 2014 Accelerated Prairie (NPB portion=\$838.5K)	\$ 3,893,600	
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable): BALANCES AS OF 3/10/14: 2011 Prairie Stewardship and Native Prairie Bank Acquisition (\$1M) - Spent=\$614,210; encumbered=\$155,359; unencumbered balance=\$230,431	\$ 230,431	unobligated - see notes to left

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2015 Proposed Acquisition/Restoration List**

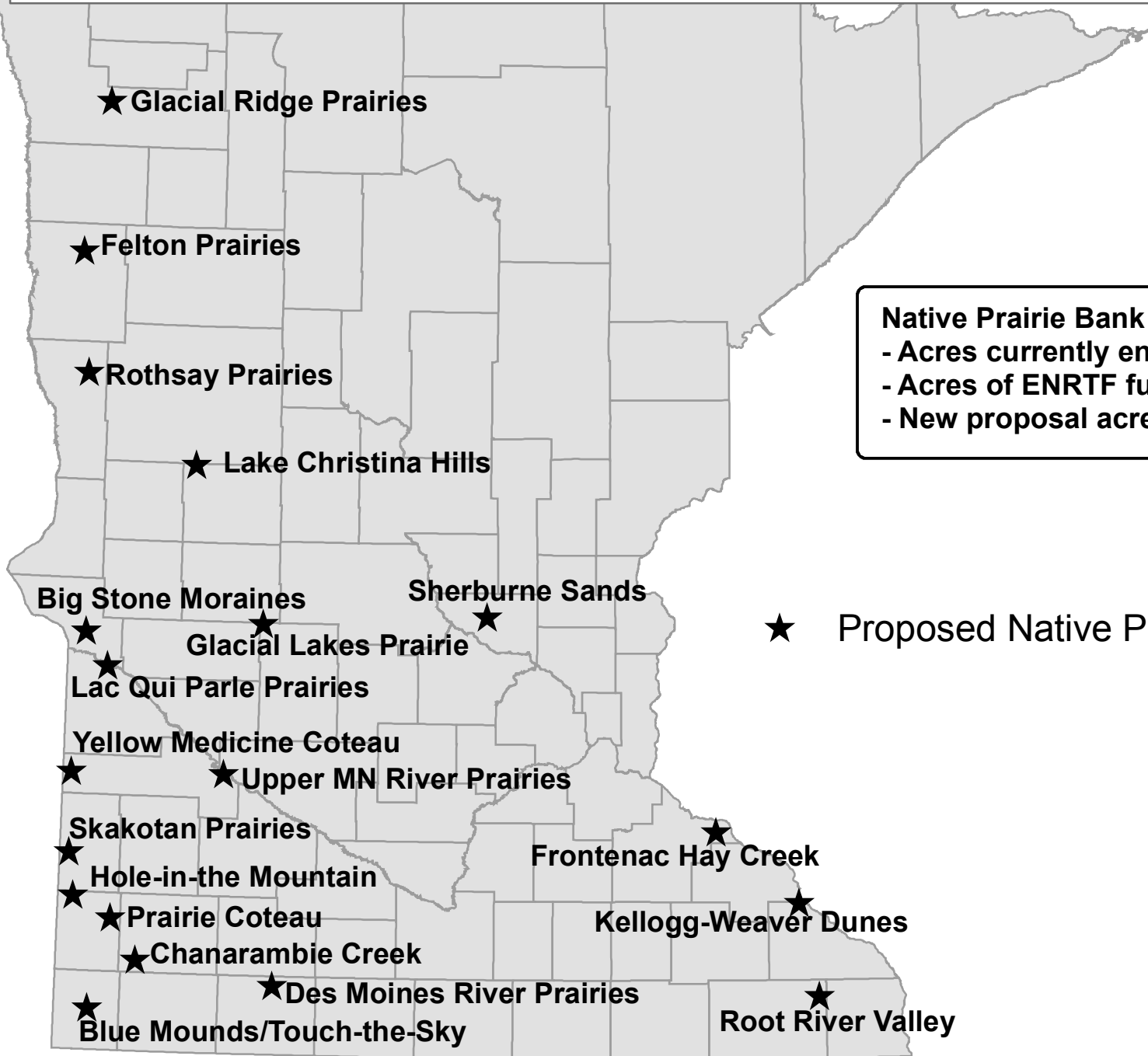
Project Title: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition
Project Manager Name: Jason Garms
ENRTF \$ Request: \$ 6,428,327

#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates Format: [Deg.]° [Min.]' [Sec.]" [Hemis.]		Estimated Cost	County	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	\$5000/ac	Murray, Pipestone	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	\$3950/ac	Big Stone, Lac Que Parle	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	\$3050/ac	Pope, Kandiyohi, Swift	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	\$4500/ac	Pipestone	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	\$3800/ac	Pipestone, Lincoln	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	\$3300/ac	Lincoln	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	\$5500/ac	Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Renville, Redwood	MN River Valley 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	\$4400/ac	Yellow Medicine	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	160		Private	DNR-SNA
9	Des Moines River Valley	327216	4857272	\$5500/ac	Cottonwood, Jackson	Des Moines River Valley native prairie including oak savanna, dry hill prairie; expands habitat for many, butterflies, birds and rare plants - including Prairie Bush Clover.	Conservation easement acquisition	100		Private	DNR-SNA
10	Blue Mounds/Touch-The-Sky Prairies	236510	4848531	\$5900/Ac	Rock	Mesic to wet prairie with rock outcrops; provides habitat for many rare rock outcrop plants	Conservation easement acquisition	80		Private	DNR-SNA

11	Big Stone Moraines	221725	5033661	\$3000/ac	Big Stone	Prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite,	Conservation easement acquisition	200		Private	DNR-SNA
12	Rothsay Prairies	241976	5154798	\$2850/ac	Wilkin	Prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite,	Conservation easement acquisition	160		Private	DNR-SNA
13	Glacial Ridge Prairies	249701	5288202	\$2250/ac	Polk	Prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite,	Conservation easement acquisition	160		Private	DNR-SNA
14	Felton Prairies	239753	5214753	\$2500/ac	Clay	Prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite,	Conservation easement acquisition	100		Private	DNR-SNA
15	Lake Christina Hills Prairies	291506	5109925	\$1950/ac	Ottertail, Douglas	Dry Hill to wet prairies; part of the rolling topography of the Alexandria moraine	Conservation easement acquisition	80		Private	DNR-SNA
16	Sherburne Sands Prairies	435916	5033884	\$2800/ac	Sherburne	A mosaic of prairie, wetlands and oak savanna set in an important transition zone	Conservation easement acquisition	80		Private	DNR-SNA
17	Frontenac Hay Creek Bluffs	545771	4929426	\$4000/ac	Goodhue	Southern Dry Bedrock Bluff (goat) prairies in a complex of bluff prairies and cold streams	Conservation easement acquisition	40		Private	DNR-SNA
18	Kellogg-Weaver Dunes Prairies	589427	4896882	\$3400/ac	Wabasha, Winona	Rolling sand dune topography, mature dunes with dry, mesic, or wet prairie as well as oak savanna	Conservation easement acquisition	40		Private	DNR-SNA
19	Root River Valley Prairies	599661	4851588	\$3800/ac	Houston, Filmore, Winona	Southern Dry Bedrock Bluff (goat) prairies in a complex of bluff prairies and cold streams; habitat for timber rattlesnakes	Conservation easement acquisition	40		Private	DNR-SNA

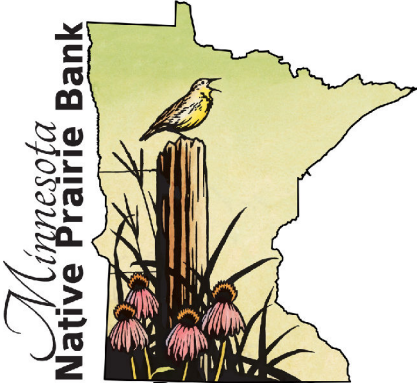
NOTES: The above list represents locations with identified native prairies and potentially interested landowners. This proposal will target these locations and enroll 1350 acres; not all sites on the list will be enrolled. Parcel Names are named Prairie Core Areas identified in the 2010 MN Prairie Conservation Plan (except: SE MN 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.

Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition



Native Prairie Bank (NPB) enrollment status:
- Acres currently enrolled in NPB = 9,067
- Acres of ENRTF funded NPB's = 1,961
- New proposal acres = 1,350

★ Proposed Native Prairie Bank Easements



Program Manager Qualifications

Project Manager: Jason Garms, Prairie Biologist
Affiliation Department of Natural Resources, Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA)
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Telephone No.: 651-259-5130 Fax: 651-296-1811
E-mail: jason.garms@state.mn.us

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 administering 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.