

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2016 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 176-G**

Native Prairie Stewardship and Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

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

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**Total Project Budget:** \$ 10,999,942

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 3 years, July 2016 to June 2019

**Summary:**

Native Prairie Bank conservation easements will be acquired on 1600 acres, habitat management will occur on 1000 acres of protected prairie and landowner stewardship will increase through assistance and workshops.

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**Location**

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

**County Name:** Statewide

**City / Township:**

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**Alternate Text for Visual:**

Potential Native Prairie Bank easements can be found throughout 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	_____ %



**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 is experiencing the highest rate of grassland-to-cropland conversion since the 1920’s. Native prairie is exceptional for providing water quality benefits and wildlife and pollinator habitat. The MN Prairie Conservation Plan provides a road map for all partners to pursue the protection of 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 identified by the MN Biological Survey (MBS) to 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 1600 acres of native prairie will be permanently protected through acquisition of DNR-administered Native Prairie Bank (NPB) conservation easements. The current landowner “waiting list” for NPB includes over 85 projects for over 5900 acres with an estimated value of \$15,000,000. 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. Enrollment will be accelerated in Native Prairie Tax Exemption. Prairie technical assistance will be provided to landowners and practitioners through varies methods including but not limited to one-on-one consultations, workshops, field days and prairie stewardship planning.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**Activity 1: Protection of Prairie of Biodiversity Significance**

**Budget: \$9,246,942**

The SNA Program will protect high quality native prairie through acquisition of NPB conservation easements on about 1600 acres. This includes no more than 15% non-prairie necessary to improve prairie management. Payment rates are determined by authorizing law, M.S. 84.96, as applied according to policies of the Department of Natural Resources and the Board of Water and Soils Resources. Conservation easement baseline reports will be completed on 30 NPBs, including all of those acquired with this funding. Monitoring will be done on 40 NPB easements. Priority sites are identified by MBS which 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 other state appropriations. Only about 50 of the 1600 acres acquired are expected to need restoration. Budgeted into this work plan is funding to be deposited into a conservation easement stewardship account (pending ML15 authorization) dedicated to the perpetual monitoring and enforcement of the conservation easements (~\$19,000/easement). The dedicated stewardship and enforcement funds will provide the support needed for long-term, ongoing monitoring and enforcement activities of Native Prairie Bank easements acquired under this proposal.

Outcome	Completion Date
1a. acquisition of about 1600 acres NPB conservation easements	6/30/19
1b. ~30 baseline property reports for NPB easements	6/30/19
1c. monitoring and stewardship of ~ 40 NPB easements	6/30/19
1d. dollars deposited into conservation easement stewardship account	6/30/19

**Activity 2: Native Prairie Restoration & Enhancement**

**Budget: \$1,272,000**

Restoration and enhancement activities would be completed on about 1000 acres. Management practices at 10 NPB sites would be monitored 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, site preparation, planting and aftercare, invasive species control, woody encroachment removal, boundary signing, site cleanup, prescribed burns (or



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alternative prescribed disturbance for ecological management purposes, such as prescribed haying, mowing or grazing, necessary where use of fire is limited) and monitoring. All restorations will use seeds/plants of local ecotype, collected from onsite or within the Seed Zone.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
2a. ~50 acres of prairie reconstruction (restoration)	6/30/19
2b. ~300 acres of woody removal & invasive species treatment	6/30/19
2c. ~ 750 acres of prescribed burns	6/30/19
2d. NPB easement boundary signs & development work on ~20 NPB sites	6/30/19
2e. adaptive management monitoring on ~10 NPB sites	6/30/19

**Activity 3: Native Prairie Landowner Assistance & Incentives**

**Budget: \$481,000**

Private landowners will increase their stewardship of native prairie through a suite of strategies. Twelve prairie management workshops/field days for private landowners and other practitioners will be held. DNR staff will provide technical consultation and outreach work to landowners and practitioners on how to best manage native prairie. At least 20 landowners will receive a comprehensive prairie stewardship plan including an evaluation of their prairie’s condition, identification of management needs, and recommendations for management action. Accelerated promotion and development of a web-based application for Native Prairie Tax Exemption (tax incentive to not destroy native prairie) will increase enrollment of landowners (about 30 new enrollees).

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
3a. ~12 workshops/field days for prairie landowners & practitioners (~1300 people)	6/30/19
3b. consultations, guidance, mgmt. asst., etc. to ~100 landowners	6/30/19
3c. 20 prairie stewardship plans provided to prairie landowners (~1500 acres)	6/30/19
3d. ~30 new enrollees in Native Prairie Tax Exemption via new web-app.	6/30/19

**III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

**A. Project Team/Partners**

The SNA Program is coordinating with Minnesota Prairie Plan partners and using the network of established Local Technical Teams to reach out to landowners and increase protected NPB easements and site stewardship. The teams are local staff from SWCD's, NRCS, DNR, USFWS, The Nature Conservancy and Pheasants Forever, etc. The teams cultivate relationships with prairie landowners and bring new potential NPB parcels to DNR prairie staff for further evaluation. Funds from this appropriation will not be used to fund activities of partners.

**B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy**

Currently, DNR holds 10,000 acres of Native Prairie Bank easements. NPB has a goal to increase enrollment by 25,000 acres by 2025, in accordance with the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. The remaining available native prairie acres will be targeted for protection by other DNR programs, as well as partner organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The program could utilize ENRTF support of up to \$10M per biennium for Native Prairie Bank easements and stewardship (including natural resource management) over the next 20 years. In order to provide for long term conservation easement stewardship, the DNR requests that all appropriations for NPB acquisition include funding to be placed in an interest bearing conservation easement stewardship account to insure on-going easement monitoring and enforcement.

**C. Timeline Requirements**

Three years (July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2019) is requested to provide multiple field seasons for the planning and implementation of activities 2 and 3. Three years is also needed to complete the steps necessary in activity 1 - seeing projects through from landowner negotiations to closing the easements.

## 2016 Detailed Project Budget

**Project Title:** Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

### IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
<b>Personnel: 10.2 FTE</b> for direct project activities spread across ~13 classified & unclassified staff paid almost exclusively through grants (e.g. LCCMR, LSOHC, etc.), including ~15-20% fringe benefits as per state union contracts: <div style="text-align: right; margin-right: 100px;">1.0 FTE</div> acquisition and management coordinators and prairie biologist (~\$177,500) 7.3 FTE specialists & technicians (~\$1,010,900) 1.9 FTE laborers & seasonal crews (~\$135,800)	\$1,324,200
<b>Contracts:</b> Professional/technical: for deliverables including adaptive management monitoring, private prairie stewardship plans, and partner assistance in landowner outreach. Service contracts: prescribed burning, woody removal - including CCM	\$575,000
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies:</b> e.g. fencing, posts, signs, safety supplies, equipment repair/parts, herbicide, seed cleaning/testing, field tools, outreach materials, etc.	\$66,600
<b>Acquisition (Permanent Easements):</b> DNR Native Prairie Bank conservation easement acquisition (1600 acres) including real estate transaction costs	\$8,222,000
<b>Travel:</b> DNR fleet charges (for operation of trucks, cars, tractors, and other specialized equipment) & instate travel costs (as per state contracts)	\$161,200
<b>Additional Budget Items:</b> Conservation Easement Stewardship account (\$418,000) MNIT Services for Prairie Tax Exemption Database (\$30,000) DNR's Direct & Necessary Costs (\$202,942) 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 (~\$14,783), Safety Support (~\$3,485), Financial Support (~\$28,518), Communication support (~\$4,944), IT Support (~\$27,996), Planning Support (~\$3,316), Procurement Support (~\$940) and division and regional program management (~\$118,961) that are necessary to accomplishing funded programs/projects.	\$650,942
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =</b>	<b>\$10,999,942</b>

### V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
<b>Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b>	\$ -	
<b>Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> No other state funds are proposed for the same purposes; if any activities are split funded their accomplishment acres will be pro-rated.	\$ -	
<b>In-kind Services During Project Period:</b> DNR office facilities, supervisor-manager time, & other support will be provided (but contributions not tracked)	\$ -	
<b>Funding History: (FY2012-2016)</b> <u>LCCMR appropriations:</u> ENRTF 2011 Prairie Stewardship and NPB Acq (\$1,000,000) ENRTF 2013 Prairie Stewardship and NPB Acq (\$750,000) <u>LSOHC appropriations:</u> LSOHC 2011 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB portion=\$229,400) LSOHC 2011 SNA & NPB Acquisition (NPB portion=\$347,800) LSOHC 2012 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB Portion=184,000) LSOHC 2013 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB portion=\$96,000) LSOHC 2013 SNA & NPB Acquisition (NPB portion=\$753,000) LSOHC 2014 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB portion=\$210,500) LSOHC 2014 NPB-RIM Acquisition (NPB portion=\$3,000,000) LSOHC 2015 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB portion=\$125,000) - pending LSOHC 2015 Accelerated Native Prairie Protection (\$3,740,000) - pending <u>Bonding:</u> None Other: partner contributions & landowner donations	\$ 10,435,700	Amount reflects total original appropriation dollars (details to the left). Does not reflect funds remaining or spent. All projects are on track to be completed by appropriation deadlines.
<b>Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable):</b> BALANCES AS OF 3/30/15: 2013 Prairie Stewardship and Native Prairie Bank Acquisition (\$750,000) -Balance: \$219,100 encumbered + \$34,700 pther unexpended *ML2015 ENRTF Prairie Stewardship and NPB Acquisition appropriation (pending): \$3,325,000	\$3,578,800 (\$3,325,000 starts July 1, 2015)	majority of current \$253,800 tied to projects nearing completion

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2016 Proposed Acquisition/Restoration List**

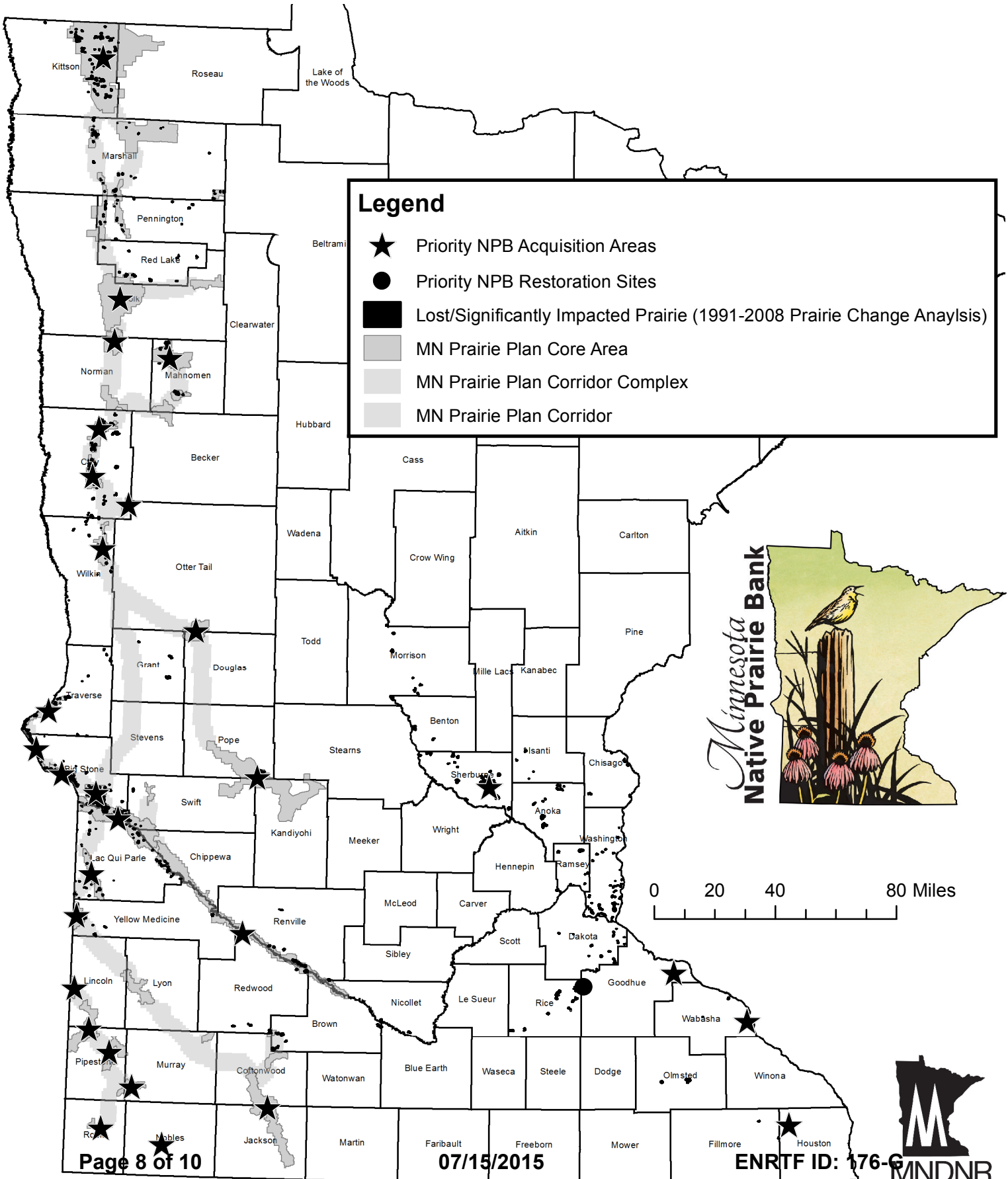
Project Title: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition  
Project Manager Name: Judy Schulte  
ENRTF \$ Request: \$ 10,999,942

#	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	43° 55' 12.9"	96° 1' 8.0"	\$4500/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	43° 12' 10.4"	96° 10' 32.1"	\$3500/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	Antelope Hills Prairie	44° 56' 0.5"	96° 20' 29.8"	\$3500/ac	Lac Qui Parle	Mixture of dry hill, sand-gravel, mesic and wet prairies. Expands habitat for many rare plant and bird species	Conservation easement acquisition	160		Private	DNR-SNA
4	Glacial Lakes & Moraine Prairie	45° 25' 20.0"	95° 14' 34.5"	\$3000/ac	Pope, Kandiyohi, Swift, Stearns	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
5	Prairie Coteau/Rock River Prairies	44° 4' 59.4"	96° 10' 23.8"	\$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
6	Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairies	44° 11' 36.9"	96° 19' 1.8"	\$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
7	Shakotan Prairies	44° 23' 1.9"	96° 25' 25.4"	\$3500/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
8	Upper MN River Prairies	44° 40' 21.2"	95° 19' 2.0"	\$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
9	Yellow Medicine Coteau Prairie	44° 43' 42.7"	96° 25' 47.0"	\$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

10	Des Moines River Valley	43° 50' 31.2"	95° 7' 7.6"	\$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
11	Blue Mounds/Touch The-Sky Prairies	43° 43' 16.2"	96° 12' 43.3"	\$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
12	Big Stone Moraines	45° 19' 7.5"	96° 20' 2.4"	\$3000/ac	Big Stone	Prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite,	Conservation easement acquisition	200		Private	DNR-SNA
13	Big Stone Lake Prairie (north & south)	45° 25' 33.7"	96° 40' 41.0"	\$3000/Ac	Big Stone	Dry Hill, mesic and wet prairies along Big Stone Lake next to DNR state park and SNA parcels	Conservation easement acquisition	80		Private	DNR-SNA
14	Rothsay Prairies	46° 29' 27.0"	96° 21' 23.4"	\$2850/ac	Wilkin	Prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite,	Conservation easement acquisition	160		Private	DNR-SNA
15	Glacial Ridge Prairies	47° 41' 46.9"	96° 18' 43.9"	\$2250/ac	Polk	Prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite,	Conservation easement acquisition	160		Private	DNR-SNA
16	Felton Prairies	47° 3' 48.0"	96° 24' 53.7"	\$2500/ac	Clay	Prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite,	Conservation easement acquisition	100		Private	DNR-SNA
17	Lake Christina Hills Prairies	46° 6' 33.3"	95° 41' 33.8"	\$1950/ac	Ottertail, Douglas, Grant	Dry Hill to wet prairies; part of the rolling topography of the Alexandria moraine	Conservation easement acquisition	80		Private	DNR-SNA
18	Sherburne Sands Prairies	45° 23' 40.7"	93° 39' 49.8"	\$2800/ac	Sherburne	A mosaic of prairie, wetlands and oak savanna set in an important transition zone	Conservation easement acquisition	80		Private	DNR-SNA
19	Frontenac Hay Creek Bluffs	44° 30' 20.5"	92° 25' 6.1"	\$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
20	Kellogg-Weaver Dunes Prairies	44° 16' 10.6"	91° 56' 2.8"	\$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
21	Root River Valley Prairies	43° 46' 14.6"	91° 39' 51.8"	\$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
22	Warsaw 7 Native Prairie Bank	44° 26' 7.7"	93° 1' 19.7"	\$1000/ac	Goodhue	Southern Dry Bedrock Bluff (goat) Prairie.	Restoration	5		Private	DNR-SNA
23	Lake Bronson and Aspen Parkland Prairies	48° 50' 39.1"	96° 30' 53.5"	\$2500/ac	Kittson, Roseau, Marshall	Aspen parkland complex-many prairie dominated aspen complexes are succeeding to woodland in absence of fire	Conservation easement acquisition	200		Private	DNR-SNA
24	Agassiz Dunes	47° 29' 8.3"	96° 20' 14.3"	\$1,800/ac	Polk, Norman	Dry barrens oak savanna-rare prairie plant community in northern MN	Conservation easement acquisition	150		Private	DNR-SNA
25	Wambach Santee Prairie	47° 24' 55.7"	95° 56' 36.3"	\$1,800/ac	Mahnomen	Prairie meadow complexes, prairie rich fens and other rare northern plant communities	Conservation easement acquisition	150		Private	DNR-SNA

26	Blanket Flower Prairies	46° 42' 5.4"	96° 11' 37.1"	\$3000/ac	Clay, Becker, Otter Tail	Dry Sand-gravel prairie in Alexandria Moraine and Hardwood Hills subsection	Conservation easement acquisition	200		Private	DNR-SNA
27	Blue Stem Prairie	46° 49' 50.0"	96° 26' 56.0"	\$1800/ac	Clay	Mesic, wet meadow/carr, & wet prairie parcels intermixed with DNR SNA and Audobon preserves	Conservation easement acquisition	80		Private	DNR-SNA
28	Lake Traverse Prairies	45° 42' 2.0"	96° 40' 48.2"	\$3000/ac	Traverse	Dry prairie and prairie-woodland complex	Conservation easement acquisition	150		Private	DNR-SNA
<p>NOTES: The above list represents locations with identified native prairies and potentially interested landowners. This proposal will target these locations and enroll 1600 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 parcels listed above. For new acquisitions, exactly where the restorations will occur will be determined after negotiating each easement.</p>											

# 2016 Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition Proposed Acquisition & Restoration Sites





## PROGRAM MANAGER QUALIFICATIONS

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**Project Manager:** Judy Schulte, Prairie Biologist  
**Affiliation:** Department of Natural Resources, Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA)  
**Mailing Address:** 1241 East Bridge Street, Redwood Falls, MN 56283  
**Telephone No.:** (507) 822-0344  
**E-mail:** [judy.schulte@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:judy.schulte@dnr.state.mn.us)

Judy Schulte is the Scientific and Natural Area Program'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". Judy is responsible for coordinating and administering programs designed to improve native prairie conservation and management on private lands and oversight of conservation easement stewardship. She provides programmatic direction and management for Native Prairie Bank, Native Prairie Tax Exemption, and Prairie Stewardship Planning Assistance. She has been involved with the implementation of several previous LCCMR projects, including:

- ML 2010 Scientific and Natural Areas and Native Prairie Restoration, Enhancement and Acquisition
- ML 2011, 2013 & 2015 Native Prairie Stewardship & Native Prairie Bank Acquisition
- ML 2011, 2013 & 2014 Scientific and Natural Areas Acquisition and Restoration

Judy has served as the Prairie Biologist with the SNA program since March of 2015. Other related experiences include:

*Region 4 Prairie Specialist, MN DNR (2011-2015)* regional lead for Native Prairie Bank easement acquisition and enhancement work, Prairie Tax Exemption, Prairie Stewardship Planning Assistance and general private prairie land technical assistance.

*District Technician, Redwood Soil & Water Conservation District (2009-2011)* Provided outreach, acquisition and management support to landowners and operators in Redwood County for a variety of county, state and federal conservation programs.

*Program Technician, USDA Redwood County Farm Service Agency (2007-2009)* Program Technician in charge of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) for Redwood County.

*Education:* Graduated from South Dakota State University in 2007 with a Bachelor of Science in Park Management & Horticulture.

Judy will provide overall management to this proposed LCCMR project. She has effectively demonstrated her capacity to manage programs and budgets, maintain accurate records, and direct staff. Judy has experience and has demonstrated the ability to collaborate with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders in addressing complicated and contentious prairie protection and management issues. She is organizationally driven and has the knowledge and background to get the 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.

