

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2017 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 172-G

Native Prairie Stewardship and Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

Category: G. Land Acquisition, Habitat and Recreation

Total Project Budget: \$ 5,185,457

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 years, July 2017 - June 2020

Summary:

Native prairie will be permanently protected and conservation actions by prairie landowners will be increased through a suite of tools offered by the DNR Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) Program.

Name: Judy Schulte

Sponsoring Organization: MN DNR

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Location

Region: Central, Northwest, Southwest, Southeast

County Name: Statewide

City / Township:

Alternate Text for Visual:

Native Prairie Bank acquisition will be targeted at high quality native prairie parcels within Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan Core Areas and priority areas in Southeast Minnesota.

_____ 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)

2017 Main Proposal

Project Title: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

PROJECT TITLE: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Native prairie will be permanently protected and conservation actions by prairie landowners will be increased through a suite of tools offered by the DNR Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) Program. Of Minnesota’s 235,000 acres of remaining native prairie, about 100,000 acres have no form of protection. Threats to native prairie are widespread including cropland conversion, mining, development, invasive species, woody encroachment and non-prairie focused land use/management. Since Native prairie is a fragile, unique natural resource that provides exceptional water quality, wildlife and pollinator benefits, these threats are extremely disheartening. 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. About 600 acres of native prairie will be permanently protected through acquisition of Native Prairie Bank (NPB) conservation easements with priority given to high quality prairie identified by the Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS). The current landowner “waiting list” for NPB includes over 85 projects for over 5200 acres with an estimated value of \$14,700,000. Native prairie restoration and enhancement activities will be implemented on about 900 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 including a new “Prairie Landowner Network” created to increase cooperation among prairie landowners.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: Protection of Prairie of Biodiversity Significance

Budget: \$3,332,267

DNR-administered NPB conservation easements will be acquired on about 600 acres of high quality native prairie, which will include 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 20 NPBs, including all of those acquired with this funding. Monitoring will be done on 20 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 in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). If needed, restoration will be completed using a combination of funds from Activity 2 below and/or other state appropriations. Only about 30 of the 600 acres acquired are expected to need restoration. Funding will be deposited into a conservation easement stewardship account dedicated to perpetual monitoring and enforcement on NPB easements acquired with this proposal.

Outcome	Completion Date
1a. acquisition of about 600 acres NPB conservation easements	6/30/2020
1b. ~20 baseline property reports for NPB easements	6/30/2020
1c. monitoring and stewardship of ~ 20 NPB easements	6/30/2020
1d. dollars deposited into conservation easement stewardship account (~10 easements)	6/30/2020

Activity 2: Native Prairie Restoration & Enhancement

Budget: \$1,156,472

Restoration and enhancement activities, based on the best scientific and technical knowledge, will be completed on about 900 acres. Activities include seed collection, site preparation, planting, invasive species control, woody species removal, boundary signing, site cleanup, prescribed burns (or alternative prescribed disturbance, such as haying, mowing or grazing, where appropriate) and monitoring. All restorations will use seeds/plants of local ecotypes, collected from onsite or within 30 miles. Adaptive Management Monitoring will occur at 14 NPB sites to evaluate whether the objectives of management were met and to contribute to future management decisions. Restoration and enhancement activities would be carried out via landowner agreements, DNR staff, Conservation Corps MN (CCM), Sentence to Service (STS), volunteers, and/or contractors.



Outcome	Completion Date
2a. ~30 acres of prairie reconstruction (restoration)	6/30/2020
2b. ~300 acres of woody removal & invasive species treatment	6/30/2020
2c. ~ 600 acres of prescribed burns	6/30/2020
2d. NPB easement boundary signs & development work on ~12 NPB sites	6/30/2020
2e. adaptive management monitoring on ~14 NPB sites	6/30/2020

Activity 3: Native Prairie Landowner Assistance & Incentives

Budget: \$696,718

Private landowners and other practitioners will increase their stewardship of native prairie through workshops, field days, one-on-one consultations, and other strategies. Federal funds will be leveraged in the creation and distribution of Landowner Handbooks, which will provide guidance and expertise to landowners of prairie and forest lands in the prairie subsections of Minnesota. A Prairie Landowner Network will be established in cooperation with Conservation Corps of Minnesota as a new innovative way to connect prairie landowners through social media, email, newsletters, training opportunities, etc. This network is aimed at improving prairie quality on private lands by keeping landowners up-to-date on the best science-based management strategies. At least 20 landowners will receive a comprehensive prairie stewardship plan that will provide specific prairie condition, protection and management expertise for their property. Landowner enrollment in Native Prairie Tax Exemption will be increased to conserve and improve management on native prairie acres which may not yet be protected permanently through other means.

Outcome	Completion Date
3a. ~10 workshops/field days for prairie landowners & practitioners (~1000 people)	6/30/2020
3b. consultations, guidance, mgmt. asst., etc. to ~80 landowners	6/30/2020
3c. 3 Prairie Subsection Landowner Handbooks (~10,000 copies plus web access)	6/30/2020
3d. ~20 enrollees in Prairie Landowner Network	6/30/2020
3e. ~20 prairie stewardship plans provided to prairie landowners (~1500 acres)	6/30/2020
3f. ~30 new enrollees in Native Prairie Tax Exemption via new web-app.	6/30/2020

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

Landowner outreach will be coordinated with Minnesota Prairie Plan partners and Local Technical Teams. The teams of staff from SWCD's, NRCS, DNR, USFWS, TNC, Pheasants Forever, etc., cultivate relationships with prairie landowners and bring new potential NPB parcels to DNR prairie staff for further evaluation. This appropriation will not be used to fund activities of partners.

B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy

DNR holds 10,080 acres of Native Prairie Bank easements to date. NPB has a goal to increase enrollment by 25,000 acres by 2025, in accordance with the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. The remaining native prairie acres will be targeted for protection by other DNR programs, as well as partner organizations. 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.

C. Timeline Requirements

Three years (July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2020) provides adequate time for acquisition negotiation and outreach activities in addition to multiple field seasons for restoration and enhancement activities.

2017 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Personnel: 9.2 FTE (for 2 years) 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: 1.0 FTE acquisition and management coordinators and prairie biologist (~\$168,000) 6.3 FTE specialists & technicians (~\$882,300) 1.9 FTE laborers & seasonal crews (~\$141,500)	\$ 1,191,800
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts: Professional/technical: e.g. adaptive management monitoring, private prairie stewardship plans. Service contracts: prescribed burning, invasives, woody removal, seed harvest & CCM for Prairie Landowner Network & Prairie Tax Exemption outreach	\$ 664,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: e.g. fencing, posts, signs, safety supplies, equipment repair/parts, herbicide, seed cleaning/testing, field tools, printing of outreach materials, etc.	\$ 81,600
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements): DNR Native Prairie Bank conservation easement acquisition (600 acres) including real estate transaction costs	\$ 2,700,000
Travel: DNR fleet charges (for operation of trucks, cars, tractors, and other specialized equipment) & instate travel costs (as per state contracts)	\$ 178,600
Additional Budget Items: Conservation Easement Stewardship account (\$200,000) Landowner Handbook - DNR Creative Services graphic design (\$15,000) MNIT Services for Prairie Tax Exemption Database for county assessor access (\$30,000) DNR's Direct & Necessary Costs (\$124,457) pay for activities that are directly related to and necessary for accomplishing appropriated programs/projects. Direct and necessary costs cover HR support (~\$27,066), Safety Support (~\$7,581), Financial Support (~\$27,244), Communication support(~\$5,264), IT Support (~\$52,866), Planning Support (~\$3,648) and Procurement Support (~\$788).	\$ 369,457
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 5,185,457

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Federal forestry match for Landowner Handbooks	\$ 30,000	<i>Secured</i>
Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Some NPB acquisition and management projects are funded with a combination of state appropriations (e.g. OHF and RIM). If any activities are split funded their accomplishment acres will be pro-rated.	\$ -	NA
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: DNR office facilities, supervisor-manager time & other support will be provided (but contributions not tracked)	\$ -	NA
Funding History: (FY2013-2017) <u>ENRTF appropriations:</u> ENRTF 2013 Prairie Stewardship and NPB Acq (\$750,000) ENRTF 2015 Prairie Stewardship and NPB Acq (\$3,325,000) <u>OHF appropriations:</u> OHF 2012 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB Portion=\$184,000) OHF 2013 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB portion=\$96,000) OHF 2013 SNA & NPB Acquisition (NPB portion=\$753,000) OHF 2014 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB portion=\$210,500) OHF 2014 NPB-RIM Acquisition (NPB portion=\$3,000,000) OHF 2015 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB portion=\$125,000) OHF 2015 Accelerated Native Prairie Protection (\$3,740,000) OHF 2016 Accelerated Native Prairie Protection (\$2,541,000)-Pending OHF 2016 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB Portion=\$215,000)-Pending Bonding: None	\$ 14,939,500	Original appropriation dollars reflected. Does not reflect funds remaining. All projects are on-track. 2012 & 2013 approps will be expended prior to this proposals timeframe.
Remaining \$ From Current ENRTF Appropriation: BALANCES AS OF 3/9/16: 2013 Prairie Stewardship and Native Prairie Bank Acquisition (\$750,000) -Balance: \$22,451 encumbered + \$9,495 unexpended, 2015 Prairie Stewardship and Native Prairie Bank Acquisition (\$3,325,000) - Balance: \$27,926 encumbered + \$3,234,397 unexpended	\$ 3,294,269	Both unspent and obligated funds (see notes to left). ML13 funds on-tract to be spent by 6/30/2016

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2017 Proposed Acquisition/Restoration List

Project Title: Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition

Project Manager Name: Judy Schulte

Organization: MN DNR-SNA

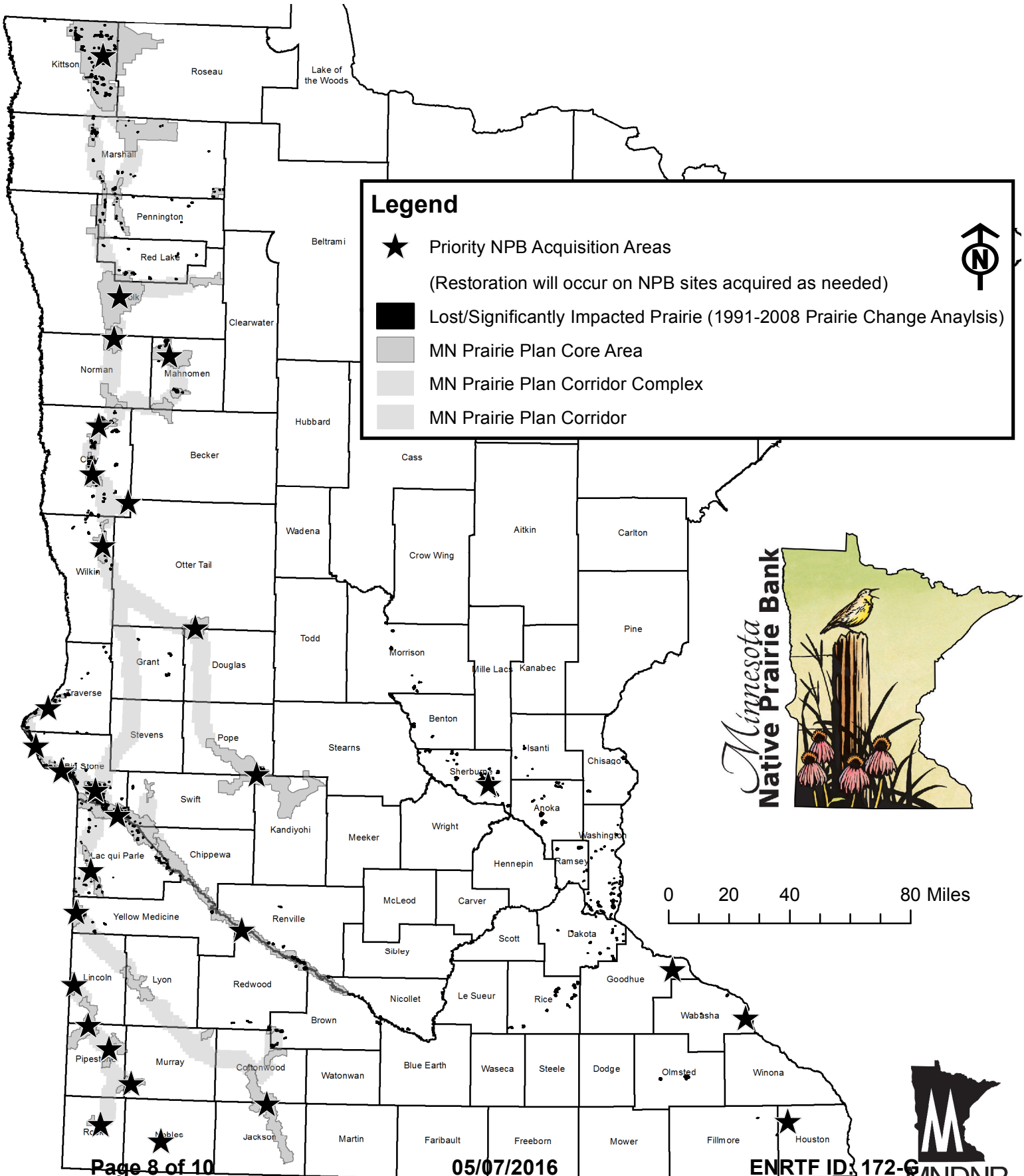
ENRTF \$ Request: \$5,185,457

#	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 Qui 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, expands habitat for many rare species as well as Prairie Chickens	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, expands habitat for many rare species as well as Prairie Chickens	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, expands habitat for many rare species as well as Prairie Chickens	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, expands habitat for many rare species as well as Prairie Chickens	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 Ames Hills prairie	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	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
23	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	Conservation easement acquisition	150		Private	DNR-SNA
24	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
25	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	Conservation easement acquisition	200		Private	DNR-SNA
26	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
27	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: NPB acquisition will be targeted at high quality native prairie parcels in the areas listed above. These are named Prairie Core Areas identified in the 2010 MN Prairie Conservation Plan, plus priority areas in SE MN. Restoration will occur on a subset of these areas with agricultural fields on acquired NPB sites. When identified, specific restoration parcels will be added to the work plan parcel list.</p>											

2017 Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund Native Prairie Stewardship & Prairie Bank Easement Acquisition Proposed Acquisition & Restoration Sites



PROGRAM MANAGER QUALIFICATIONS

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
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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.

