

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2019 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 212-F

Conserving Minnesota's Best Prairie Habitats and Rarest Species

Category: F. Methods to Protect, Restore, and Enhance Land, Water, and Habitat

Sub-Category:

Total Project Budget: \$ 1,261,500

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: June 30, 2022 (3 yrs)

Summary:

The project will accelerate management on 30,000 acres of "Biologically Significant" prairie, conduct monitoring of rare prairie species, and develop a comprehensive database of management practices and their impacts.

Name: Neal Feeken

Sponsoring Organization: The Nature Conservancy

Title: Grassland Conservation Program Director

Department: _____

Address: 1101 W River Pkwy, Ste 200
Minneapolis MN 55415

Telephone Number: (612) 331-0738

Email nfeeken@tnc.org

Web Address nature.org

Location

Region: Central, Northwest, Southwest, Southeast

County Name: Becker, Big Stone, Chippewa, Clay, Cottonwood, Kandiyohi, Kittson, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Mohnomen, Marshall, Nobles, Norman, Pennington, Pipestone, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Rock, Roseau, Stearns, Swift, Wabasha, Wilkin, Yellow Medicine

City / Township:

Alternate Text for Visual:

Lands designated as having "Significant Biodiversity" by the MN Biological survey and located within Important Prairie Landscapes

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity	_____ Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ TOTAL _____%
_____ If under \$200,000, waive presentation?			



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)
2019 Main Proposal Template
Conserving Minnesota's Best Prairie Habitats and Rarest Species

PROJECT TITLE: Conserving Minnesota's Best Prairie Habitats and Rarest Species

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

This project will benefit some of Minnesota's best remaining native prairie acres and increase the conservation community's ability to manage for rare species by:

- **Accelerating management** on approximately 30,000 acres of prairie designated as "Biologically Significant" by the MN Biological Survey.
- Conducting **population and habitat monitoring** for two of Minnesota's rarest prairie species - Western Prairie Fringed Orchid and Dakota skipper.
- Consolidating 30+ years of monitoring results into a **comprehensive database** for use by the conservation community

Once abundant, now exceedingly rare, prairies have been largely eliminated from Minnesota. Fortunately, a few important jewels are protected within state, federal and private ownership. These remnants of the past contain many of our most endangered plant and animal communities and require ongoing management to ensure they retain their integrity. By focusing on prairies designated as "Biologically Significant" by the MN Biological Survey this project will accelerate much needed management on some of our most important remaining prairies.

A small subset of these Biologically Significant acres serve as habitat for the once abundant, but now federally listed, Dakota skipper. One challenge with restoring skipper populations is uncertainty with respect to prairie management practices such as prescribed fire and their impact on skipper populations. This project will provide critical funding for the Conservancy's work with partners (USFWS, MN DNR, MN Zoo) to develop foundational knowledge and define best practices for enhancing skipper habitat.

The federally threatened Western Prairie Fringed Orchid also depends almost exclusively on "Biologically Significant" prairies. The Conservancy has worked for many years with USFWS and MN DNR to monitor the distribution of orchid populations. Funds from this proposal will allow us to continue that monitoring, and inform management decisions by the Conservancy and other land managers.

Finally, the Conservancy has conducted management on our prairie Preserves for 30+ years while simultaneously collecting monitoring data on the effects of our work. We have an impressive series of related, but not fully compatible, datasets spanning our Preserves across the prairie region. We will use funds from this project to integrate TNC databases, conduct analyses, and make the information available to partners to inform future landscape-scale management actions.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: Accelerate management on "Biologically Significant" Prairies

We will use proven management techniques such as prescribed fire, invasive species monitoring/treatment, and conservation grazing to accelerate management on approximately 30,000 acres of prairie designated as "Biologically Significant" by the MN Biological Survey. This will be accomplished through seasonal habitat crews, regular Conservancy staff, and private vendor contracts.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$840,251

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Approximately 15,000 acres of "Biologically Significant" prairie enhanced and monitored using prescribed fire	June 2022
2. Approximately 12,500 acres of "Biologically Significant" prairie enhanced through invasive species treatment/monitoring and woody removal	June 2022
3. Approximately 2,500 acres of Biologically Significant" prairie managed using conservation grazing and subsequent monitoring	June 2022

Activity 2: Monitoring for Dakota skipper and Western Prairie Fringed Orchid



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

2019 Main Proposal Template

Conserving Minnesota's Best Prairie Habitats and Rarest Species

Dakota skipper populations and associated habitat will be annually assessed using qualified private vendors. Survey results will be analyzed by Conservancy staff and used to inform recovery permitting processes being developed by US Fish & Wildlife Service and reintroduction efforts by the MN Zoo.

Western Prairie Fringed Orchid populations will be monitored by Conservancy staff with results contributing to long-term data sets.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$134,977

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Dakota skipper habitat and population assessments completed and analyzed for use by recovery partners	June 2022
2. Western Prairie Fringed Orchid populations monitored annually with information added to existing datasets	June 2022

Activity 3: Develop Management Results Database

A database manager/analyst will be hired to consolidate and analyze historic TNC monitoring/management data sets from Conservancy offices. Information will be shared with partners to inform future landscape-scale management decisions.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$286,272

Outcome	
1. Data sets from Conservancy Preserves consolidated into a comprehensive format	December 2021
2. Consolidated information analyzed and summary report completed	June 2022

III. PROJECT PARTNERS:

The Nature Conservancy will be responsible for completing this project through the hiring and supervision of short-term seasonal land management staff and the employment of contractors such as Conservation Corps Minnesota. Seasonal staff and contractors will be supervised by existing full time Conservancy Land Stewardship Staff who have great skill, knowledge and certifications in invasive species control and prescribed fire. Project goals will be reached by working cooperatively with the Minnesota DNR on the management of WMAs, SNAs, and State Parks, the USFWS on WPAs and National Wildlife Refuge lands and private landowners. The project is complementary to MN DNR and USFWS recovery efforts for skippers and orchids. The partnerships will not involve the exchange of funds.

IV. LONG-TERM- IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:

The Nature Conservancy's long-term goal with this project is to enhance prairie identified as Biologically Significant. Because these are some of our most important remaining prairie sites sustaining this work will be accomplished by both private and public fundraising, and may include additional requests in future years of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

V. TIME LINE REQUIREMENTS:

Three Years (July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2022) are requested to provide multiple field seasons for implementation and monitoring.

VI. SEE ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL COMPONENTS:

A. Proposal Budget Spreadsheet

B. Visual Component or Map

C. Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description

D. Letter or Resolution

E. Certified Audit or 990 Tax Information

2019 Proposal Budget Spreadsheet

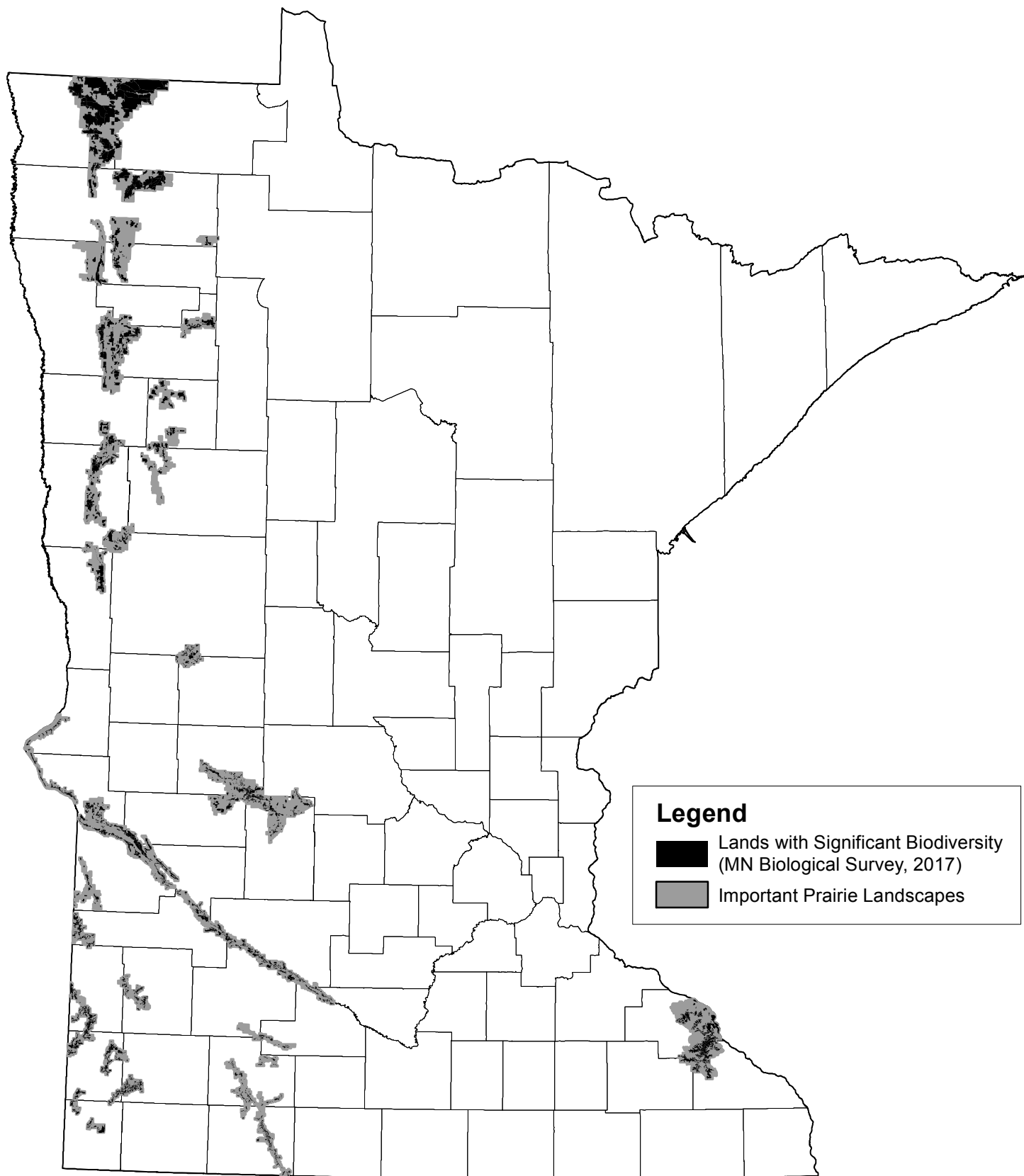
Project Title:

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET *[Insert # of years for project] years*

BUDGET ITEM (See "Guidance on Allowable Expenses")	AMOUNT
Personnel: All positions X 3 years: Seasonal field staff (7 ea. @.42FTE; 89.3% salary, 10.7% ben); Manager (1FTE; 71.4% sal, 28.6% ben); Stewardship staff (1.5FTE; 71.4% sal, 28.6% ben); Ecologist (0.1FTE; 71.4% sal, 28.6% ben); Manager (.25FTE; 71.4% sal, 28.6% ben) subject to change annually	\$ 869,000
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts: Dakota Skipper habitat and population monitoring/inventory; Habitat enhancement via private vendors (including Conservation Corps MN); Western Prairie Fringed orchid habitat monitoring	\$ 233,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Fire gear/personal protection equipment for seasonal staff; fuel for habitat enhancement work (tractor/ATV/UTV); Herbicide for invasive species treatments; laptop computer and associated equipment required for database development; and other necessary supplies	\$ 93,500
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):	N/A
Travel: Mileage for TNC vehicles 40,000 miles/year * 3 years at IRS standard mileage rate travel as needed	\$ 66,000
Additional Budget Items:	
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 1,261,500

V. OTHER FUNDS *(This entire section must be filled out. Do not delete rows. Indicate "N/A" if row is not applicable.)*

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Privately raised funds to cover Conservancy staff time for project related activities	\$ 150,000	Secured
Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:	N/A	
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Unrecovered indirect as leverage budgeted conservatively and reported at our NICRA rate	\$ 227,070	Secured
Past and Current ENRTF Appropriation:	N/A	
Other Funding History:	\$ -	



Legend

- Lands with Significant Biodiversity (MN Biological Survey, 2017)
- Important Prairie Landscapes

Lands with Significant Biodiversity in Minnesota's Important Prairie Landscapes



The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

30 15 0 30
Miles

S:\Grants\LCMR - TNC\LCMR_Prop_Map_20180405.mxd

Safeguarding Minnesota's Rarest Prairie Communities and Species

Organization Description

For more than 50 years The Nature Conservancy has been working in the Prairie Pothole region to protect the remaining grasslands and wetlands that are critically important to the state's grassland birds, pollinators, and wildlife. With more than 1 million members The Nature Conservancy is one of the leading conservation organizations working around the world to address the most pressing conservation threats to nature and people. The Conservancy is a science-based, collaborative and non-confrontational nonprofit organization that looks for ways to protect nature so that all life will benefit from the services nature provides. It strategically targets its efforts by using a variety of tools such as land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship of ecologically important lands, collaboration with key partners, and developing creative financing to find pragmatic solutions to conservation challenges.

Project Manager Qualifications

Neal Feeken is the Grassland Conservation Program Director for The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota. Since joining the Conservancy in 2008 he has been working to develop new initiatives for grassland conservation by forging partnerships between the conservation community, state and federal agencies, and the agricultural community to test and demonstrate mechanisms for utilizing native and restored grasslands for forage and bioenergy while protecting and enhancing the resource. His previous experiences include serving as Assistant Regional Director for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and as the Manager of a local County Soil and Water Conservation District in Watonwan county. Neal has a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife & Fisheries Science from South Dakota State University and a Master of Arts in Nonprofit Management from Hamline University in St Paul, Minnesota.