

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

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**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 247-G**

DNR Scientific and Natural Areas

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

**Sub-Category:**

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**Total Project Budget: \$** 5,758,000

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

**Summary:**

Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) habitat restoration and improvements (1100+ acres), increased public involvement and strategic acquisition (500+ acres) will conserve Minnesota's most unique and rare resources for everyone's benefit.

**Name:** Judy Schulte

**Sponsoring Organization:** MN DNR

**Title:** Prairie Biologist

**Department:** Division of Ecological and Water Resources

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Redwood Falls MN 55310

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**Location**

**Region:** Statewide

**County Name:** Statewide

**City / Township:**

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**Alternate Text for Visual:**

SNA restoration priorities are located in existing/proposed SNAs across the state and the acquisition priorities are located in Conservation Opportunity Areas. Photo-Two girls examining big bluestem grass on a SNA.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Funding Priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge Base
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extent of Impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific/Tech Basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Urgency
<input type="checkbox"/>	Capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Readiness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Leverage	<input type="checkbox"/>	TOTAL <input type="checkbox"/> %
<input type="checkbox"/> If under \$200,000, waive presentation?							



**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)**  
**2019 Main Proposal**  
**DNR Scientific and Natural Areas**

**PROJECT TITLE:** DNR Scientific and Natural Areas

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

The unique and vital role of state Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) will be increased through wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement (prescribed burn, invasive control, etc.), increased public involvement, and strategic acquisition. About 1100 acres of native habitat restoration, enhancement, and site improvement activities will be targeted at SNAs threatened by human impacts, invasive species, and lack of natural disturbance regimes and to provide nature-based recreation. In cooperation with Conservation Corp of Minnesota (CCM), outreach and citizen science actions will result in public participation at 80 SNA events and a network of volunteer site stewards at 130 SNAs. About 500 acres will be acquired from willing sellers and designated as SNAs in order to strategically protect at risk native plant communities and wildlife habitat of state significance identified by the Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) and the updated SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**Activity 1: Native Habitat Restoration, Enhancements and Improvements on 1100 acres**

Native habitat restoration and site improvement activities will be completed on about 1100 acres at about 50 SNAs as guided by ecological data and monitoring. Management plans will be completed for about 10 SNAs (including sites acquired through these funds). About 50 SNAs will be monitored to improve management of habitat for rare be compliance monitored. Work will begin to create a strategic long-term ecological monitoring plan. Interpretive signs-kiosks will be developed and installed at about 10 SNAs. SNA staff will provide ecological/technical guidance and on-site verification for 6 projects implemented by partners on SNAs. Restoration and improvement activities will be carried out by DNR staff, CCM, Sentence to Service, volunteers, and/or contractors. Activities include seed collection, site preparation, planting and aftercare, invasive species control and removal, site clean-up, signing, interpretive kiosks, fencing, prescribed burns (or alternative prescribed disturbance, such prescribed haying, mowing or grazing, necessary where use of fire is limited), management plan preparation, monitoring, and coordination-oversight of projects implemented by partners. This activity includes work to bring acquired parcels up to DNR's minimum standards and includes restoration and improvements of acquired sites if ecologically advisable and feasible within the appropriation period.

**ENRTF BUDGET: \$1,812,508**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. ~25 acres of restoration of forest, prairie, & outcrop sites	06/30/2022
2. ~400 acres of woody removal & invasive species treatment	06/30/2022
3. ~675 acres of prescribed burns	06/30/2022
4. ~10 SNA interpretive kiosks installed AND development work on ~15 sites	06/30/2022
5. ecological/technical guidance for ~6 partnership projects	06/30/2022
6. management plans completed for ~10 SNAs	06/30/2022
7. adaptive management, ecological & conservation easement monitoring on ~50 SNAs	06/30/2022

**Activity 2: Public Engagement, Outreach & Citizen Science in Natural Areas**

More Minnesotans will be involved in volunteer habitat conservation and education activities on SNAs and in the conservation of other key natural areas. A full-time team of 1.5 CCM individual placements, 2 SNA field naturalists and 1 outreach coordinator made possible through this funding will: sustain a network of 130 SNA volunteer site stewards who help care for SNAs and organize about 80 events focusing volunteer work days, recreation-educational events (guided nature hikes, etc.), and citizen science monitoring and bio-blitzes. New and refined electronic/social media communications tools, maps and interpretive information will be developed and disseminated to advance the public's understanding of Minnesota's wild places and biodiversity and to enhance nature-based recreational use of SNAs. Natural Area Registry agreements will be established on about 2 biodiversity significance sites to promote conservation of natural areas owned by others.



**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)**  
**2019 Main Proposal**  
**DNR Scientific and Natural Areas**

**ENRTF BUDGET: \$555,038**

Outcome	Completion Date
1. SNA website, e-book, social media, maps & other interpretive info	06/30/2022
2. ~ 80 citizen science & volunteer events (management work days & ed. events)	06/30/2022
3. network of volunteer site stewards at ~130 SNAs	06/30/2022
4. ~2 Natural Area Registry agreements to conserve biodiversity significance sites	06/30/2022

**Activity 3: Strategic Acquisition of Sites with Biodiversity Significance – 500 acres**

Acquisition and designation of about 500 acres as state SNAs will protect and buffer the most important MBS-recommended sites of biodiversity significance with landowners willing to sell. Proactive landowner contacts will be targeted in 10 high priority opportunity areas identified in the SNA Strategic Plan, including prairie core areas in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. In order to be acquired and designated as SNA, the site must be recommended for SNA designation in an Ecological Evaluation report which serves as the site's baseline assessment for fee acquisitions. Candidate sites are numerically evaluated with priority to MBS-mapped biodiversity significance sites that are predominantly MBS-mapped native plant communities with habitat for rare species and Species in Greatest Conservation Need. The attached map and acquisition list identifies priority projects for this appropriation. The DNR may request to add other qualifying sites to the list. Most acquisition will be of fee title, but if more appropriate, acquisition could be a SNA-administered conservation easement with SNA designation. New to the parcel list, is the addition of specific sites currently protected via permanent conservation easements that fall into SNA's Strategic Protection Plan. The rare features and unique plant communities on these sites would greatly benefit from the protection and management opportunities provided by SNA and would add great value to SNA goals and mission. If acquired, an appraisal would be utilized to find the fair market value of the land including current encumbrances such as conservation easements. New MBS and other scientific data will be incorporated into the SNA Strategic Plan GIS maps to continue refinement and increase strategic prioritization of SNA acquisitions.

**ENRTF BUDGET: \$3,390,455**

Outcome	Completion Date
1. acquisition as SNA of ~500 acres of high quality habitat	06/30/2022

**III. PROJECT PARTNERS:**

**A. Partners receiving ENRTF funding: N/A**

**B. Partners NOT receiving ENRTF funding**

This proposal includes funding for SNA work towards partnership project work on SNAs. Partners include entities, such as The Nature Conservancy, Friends of the Mississippi River, Great River Greening, Sugarloaf Northshore Stewardship Assn., local units of governments, and other non-profits.

**IV. LONG-TERM- IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:**

Without SNA conservation actions, habitats for rare species, and sites of high biodiversity significance are likely to be lost forever. The SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan (of 2014) helps us target our acquisition efforts (on existing public land or through acquisition) to get the best ecological value for every dollar spent. Achieving SNA habitat management, public engagement, and acquisition goals depends upon ongoing support from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust fund of \$5M to \$10M per biennium. Annual/biennial appropriations will also be sought from the Outdoor Heritage Fund and state bonding.

**V. TIME LINE REQUIREMENTS:**

Three years (July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2022) provides multiple field seasons for restoration and site improvement work and evaluation and to take protection projects through basic improvements needed.

## 2019 Proposal Budget Spreadsheet

**Project Title:** DNR Scientific and Natural Areas

### IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET: 3 years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
<b>Personnel:</b> ~ 10.1 FTE (for 2 years each) for direct project activities spread across ~25 classified & unclassified staff paid primarily through grants (e.g. LCCMR, LSOHC, etc.) including ~15-25% fringe benefits as per state union contracts: 1.7 FTE (for 2 years) coordinators (acquisition, outreach, management, GIS) (~\$312,049) 6.7 FTE (for 2 years) specialists, naturalists, technicians, full time laborers (~\$909,400) 1.7 FTE (for 2 years) seasonal laborers & crews (~\$125,600)	\$ 1,347,049
<b>Professional/Technical Contracts:</b> e.g. mgmt plan prep, monitoring, video/photo, etc. (~\$144,000) <b>Conservation Corps MN:</b> Act. 1 e.g. invasives, rxburn(\$204,253) & Act. 2 outreach (\$114,000) (~\$318,253) <b>Service Contracts:</b> e.g. invasives, woody removal, rxburn (~\$240,000) For all contracts, priority is given to CCM and contractors will be selected following state procurement & bidding processes	\$ 702,253
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies:</b> herbicide, posts, signs, safety supplies, equipment repair/parts, seed cleaning/testing, field tools, exclosure fence for monitoring, outreach materials, safety equipment for volunteers, etc.	\$ 89,500
<b>Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):</b> 500 acres acquired by DNR & designated SNA; primarily fee title (possibly conservation easement); includes transaction costs and the ability to transfer up to \$100,000 into the DNR Conservation Easement Stewardship Account (determined by DNR Easement Stewardship Calculator on site-by-site basis, no more than \$20,000 per easement) if easements are acquired.	\$ 3,220,000
<b>Travel:</b> DNR fleet charges (for operation of trucks, cars, & special fieldwork equipment) & instate travel costs (as per state contracts)	\$ 241,000
<b>Additional Budget Item:</b> printing (designation orders, interpretive kiosk graphics, & info. materials	\$ 7,900
<b>Additional Budget Item:</b> MNIT Adaptive Management database ecological data & monitoring upgrades	\$ 5,000
<b>Additional Budget Item:</b> Conservation Corps Mn individual placement MNIT computer rental/support and office supplies	\$ 4,000
<b>Additional Budget Items:</b> DNR's direct and necessary costs (~\$141,298 total) pay for activities that are directly related to and necessary for accomplishing appropriated programs/projects. Direct and necessary costs cover HR Support (~\$29,727), Safety Support (~\$6,158), Financial Support (~\$26,537), Communication Support (~\$6,256), IT Support (~\$67,326), and Planning Support (~\$5,294) that are necessary to accomplishing funded programs/projects.	\$ 141,298
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =</b>	<b>\$ 5,758,000</b>

### 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
<b>Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b> Potential: partial landowner & partner donations; any actual \$s would be reported & accomplishments pro-rated.	\$ -	
<b>Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b> Some SNA acquisitions 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.	\$ -	
<b>In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b> DNR office facilities, copiers, computer, communications; supervisor & manager time (but contributions not tracked).	\$ -	
<b>Past and Current ENRTF Appropriation:</b> ML13 SNA Conservation, Restoration, Enhancement & Citizen Engagement \$1,500,000 (complete) ML14 SNA Acquisition, Restoration, Improvements & Citizen Engagement \$2,540,000 (complete) ML15 SNA Acquisition, Restoration, Enhancement & Public Engagement \$4,000,000 (complete 6/18) ML16 SNA Restoration \$1,386,000. Balance: \$176,395 Encumbered & \$1,086,605 unexpended ML16 SNA Mn Point Pine Forest SNA Acquisition \$500,000. Balance: \$9,773 Encumbered & \$485,015 unexpended ML17 SNA Acquisition, Restoration, Citizen Science & Engagement \$2,500,000 Balance: \$115,533 Encumbered & \$2,370,139 unexpended ML18 SNA Habitat Restoration, Public Engagement, and Strategic Acquisition \$3,250,000 (pending)	\$ 15,676,000	Spent: \$8,182,540 Legally Obligated: \$301,701 Unspent: \$3,941,759 Pending: \$3,250,000
<b>Other Funding History:</b> ML14 OHF DNR Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (SNA portion-\$360,800). Balance-\$95,380 ML14 OHF WMA & SNA Acquisition \$0 (all funds moved to WMA) ML15 OHF DNR Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (SNA portion-\$762,000). Balance-\$429,342 ML15 OHF WMA & SNA Acquisition (SNA portion-\$506,783). Balance-\$51,330 ML16 OHF DNR Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (SNA portion-\$622,900). Balance-\$502,741 ML16 OHF WMA & SNA Acquisition (SNA portion-\$228,000). Balance-\$227,900 ML17 OHF DNR Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (SNA portion-\$579,800). Balance-\$561,728 ML17 OHF WMA & SNA Acquisition (SNA portion-\$1,485,000). Balance- \$1,485,000 ML18 OHF DNR Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (SNA portion-\$379,856). Pending ML18 OHF WMA & SNA Acquisition (SNA portion-\$677,100). Pending	\$ 5,602,239	Spent: \$1,191,862 Unspent (includes legally obligated): \$3,353,421 Pending \$1,056,956

Attachment C:  
Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
M.L. 2019 Acquisition/Restoration Parcel List Spreadsheet  
Project Title: Native Prairie Bank Conservation Easements and Landowner Assistance  
Legal Citation:  
Project Manager: Judy Schulte  
Organization: MN DNR-SNA  
College/Department/Division: Division of Ecological & Water Resources  
M.L. 2019 ENRTF Appropriation:  
Project Length and Completion Date: June 30, 2022  
Today's Date: March 14, 2018



#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates (preferably from the center of the parcel) Format: [Deg.]° [Min.]' [Sec.]" [Hemis.]		Estimated Cost	County	Site Significance (please include what ecosystem (e.g., prairie, forest, wetland, savanna) is represented as well as the ecological significance, site importance, conservation value, and public benefits)	Activity Description (e.g. fee title acquisition, conservation easement acquisition, site preparation, restoration)	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles	Type of Landowner (private individual or trust, non-profit organization, for-profit entity)	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)	Status of work (e.g. engaged in landowner negotiations, no longer in consideration, restoration activities underway)
		Latitude	Longitude									
1	Chanarambie Creek Prairies	43° 55' 12.9"	96° 1' 8.0"	\$2800/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	Proposed
2	Lac Qui Parle Prairies	45° 13' 37.8"	96° 14' 8.9"	\$2300/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	Proposed
3	Antelope Hills Prairie	44° 56' 0.5"	96° 20' 29.8"	\$2300/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	Proposed
4	Glacial Lakes & Moraine Prairie	45° 25' 20.0"	95° 14' 34.5"	\$2500/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	Proposed
5	Prairie Coteau/Rock River Prairies	44° 4' 59"	96° 10' 23.8"	\$2600/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	Proposed

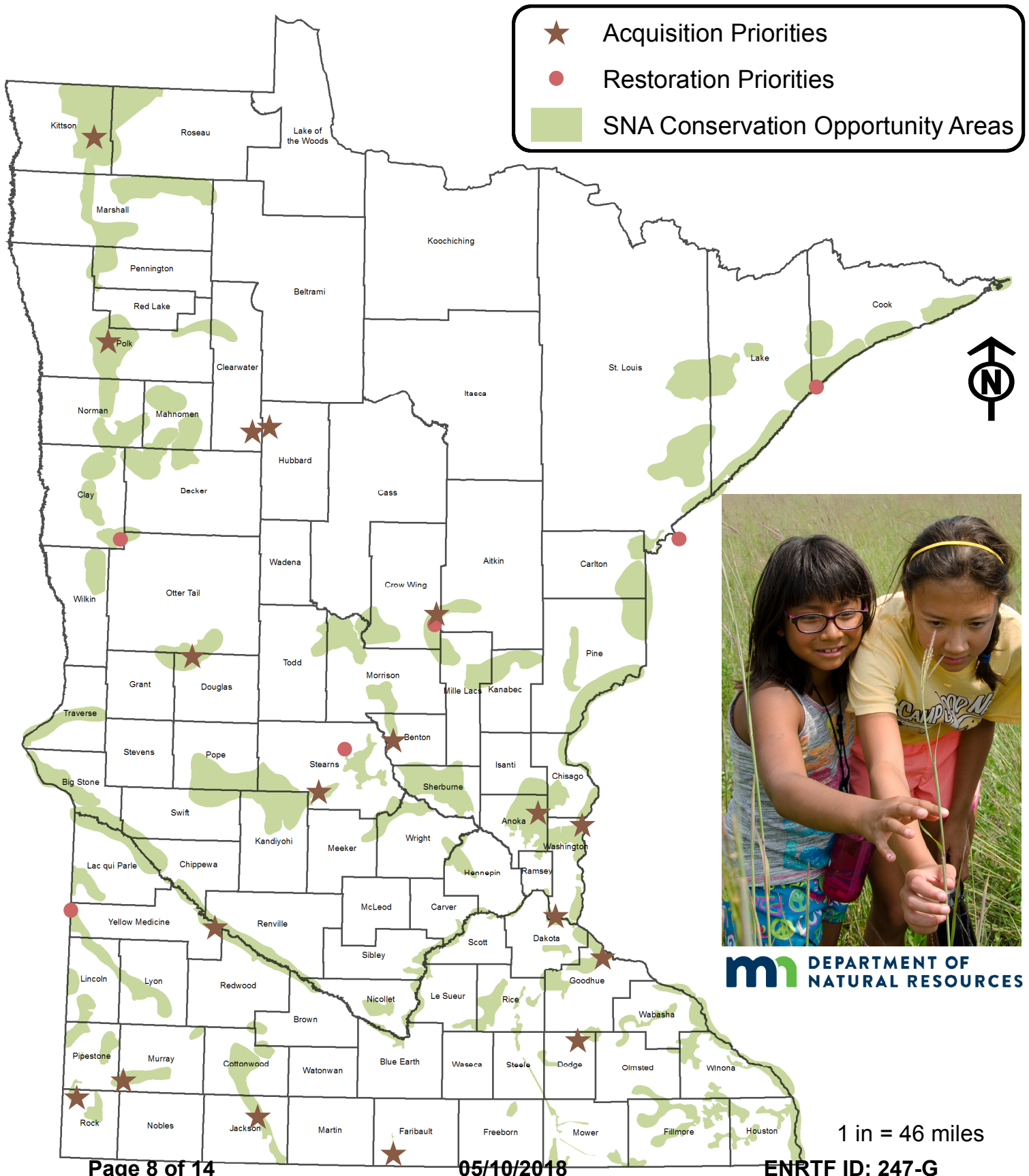
6	Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairies	44° 9' 46.8"	96° 19' 6.1"	\$2600/ac	Pipestone, Lincoln	Dry hill prairie, prairie meadow, wet prairie, rare species; part of a large, contiguous prairie macrosite, expands habitat around existing TNC and DNR lands	Conservation easement acquisition	150		Private	DNR-SNA	Proposed
7	Shakotan Prairies	44° 23' 1.9"	96° 25' 25.4"	\$2600/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	Proposed
8	Upper MN River Prairies	44° 40' 21.2"	95° 19' 2.0"	\$2900/ac	Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Renville,	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	Proposed
9	Yellow Medicine Coteau Prairie	44° 43' 42.7"	96° 25' 47.0"	\$2500/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	Proposed
10	Des Moines River Valley	43° 50' 31.2"	95° 7' 7.6"	\$3000/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	Proposed
11	Blue Mounds/Touch-The-Sky Prairies	43° 43' 16.2"	96° 12' 43.3"	\$4000/Ac	Rock	Mesic to wet prairie with rock outcrops; provides habitat for many rare rock outcrop plants	Conservation easement acquisition	80		Private	DNR-SNA	Proposed
12	Big Stone Moraines	45° 19' 7.5"	96° 20' 2.4"	\$1800/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	Proposed
13	Big Stone Lake Prairie (north & south)	45° 25' 33.7"	96° 40' 41.0"	\$1800/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	Proposed
14	Rothsay Prairies	46° 29' 27.0"	96° 21' 23.4"	\$1600/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	Proposed
15	Glacial Ridge Prairies	47° 41' 46.9"	96° 18' 43.9"	\$1600/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	Proposed
16	Felton Prairies	47° 3' 48.0"	96° 24' 53.7"	\$1800/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	Proposed
17	Lake Christina Hills Prairies	46° 6' 33.3"	95° 41' 33.8"	\$1800/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	Proposed

18	Sherburne Sands Prairies	45° 23' 40.7"	93° 39' 49.8"	\$1600/ac	Sherburne	A mosaic of prairie, wetlands and oak savanna set in an important transition zone	Conservation easement acquisition	80		Private	DNR-SNA	Proposed
19	Frontenac Hay Creek Bluffs	44° 30' 20.5"	92° 25' 6.1"	\$2600/ac	Goodhue	Southern dry bedrock bluff (goat) prairies in a complex of bluff prairies and cold streams	Conservation easement acquisition	40		Private	DNR-SNA	Proposed
20	Kellogg-Weaver Dunes Prairies	44° 16' 10.6"	91° 56' 2.8"	\$2500/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	Proposed
21	Root River Valley Prairies	43° 46' 14.6"	91° 39' 51.8"	\$2400/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	Proposed
22	Lake Bronson and Aspen Parkland Prairies	48° 50' 39.1"	96° 30' 53.5"	\$1000/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	Proposed
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 MN	Conservation easement acquisition	150		Private	DNR-SNA	Proposed
24	Wambach Santee Prairie	47° 24' 55.7"	95° 56' 36.3"	\$1,000/ac	Mahnomen	Prairie meadow complexes, prairie rich fens and other rare northern plant communities	Conservation easement acquisition	150		Private	DNR-SNA	Proposed
25	Blanket Flower Prairies	46° 42' 5.4"	96° 11' 37.1"	\$1500/ac	Clay, Becker, Otter Tail	Dry Sand-gravel prairie in Alexandria Moraine and Hardwood Hills subsection	Conservation easement acquisition	200		Private	DNR-SNA	Proposed
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	Proposed
27	Lake Traverse Prairies	45° 42' 2.0"	96° 40' 48.2"	\$2000/ac	Traverse	Dry prairie and prairie- woodland complex	Conservation easement acquisition	150		Private	DNR-SNA	Proposed
<b>NOTES:</b> This proposal will target these locations and enroll 300 acres into permanent NPB conservation easements; not all sites on the list will be enrolled. Parcel Names are named Prairie Core Areas identified in the 2010 MN Prairie Conservation Plan with the addition of priority SE MN prairies. Restoration parcels are the acquisition parcels listed above and small select restorations on existing NPBs. Specific restoration details will be added once locations are finalized.												



# 2019 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Proposal

## DNR Scientific and Natural Areas





## Attachment D. Additional Work Plan Information for Acquisition, Easements, and Restoration

### Acquisition/Restoration Information:

#### Fee Title Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

To be acquired and designated as SNA, the site must be recommended for SNA designation in an Ecological Evaluation report which serves as the site's baseline assessment for fee acquisitions. All such sites are predominantly MBS-mapped native plant communities and contain habitat for rare species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. In addition, SNA staff use the "SNA Candidate Site Evaluation Guide" (initially developed through the ENRTF-funded SNA strategic planning process) which incorporates criteria to rate which sites are currently pursued. Criteria include diversity and quality of the native habitat, occurrence of rare species, occurrence of native plant communities under-represented in SNA system, parcel size, location of parcel in relation to biodiversity hotspots (particularly MBS-mapped areas of outstanding and high biodiversity significance) and other conservation lands (including SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan's Conservation Opportunity Areas and Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan's Core Areas), potential for long-term management, and additional factors (e.g. landowner readiness, urgency, and willingness to donate; degree of threat, and partnership opportunities).

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified. Include a link to the plan if one is available.
  - *SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan* – <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snap/plan.html>
  - *Minnesota's State Wildlife Action Plan* – <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mnwap/index.html>
  - *Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan* – [www.dnr.state.mn.us/prairieplan](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/prairieplan)
3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

Each parcel acquired as a new SNA in fee will have an Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) or if as an addition to an existing SNA, that SNAs Management Plan may be amended to add the new parcel. The AMPs include goals, ecological description, priority features with indicators, and management recommendations. The intended outcome of management of SNAs is that 1) all the lands be native plant communities or restored to plant communities that would have been native to the site, 2) these plant communities are sustained over time, and 3) that visitors are accommodated safely (unless visitor access is restricted by designation order). The goals for the SNA's management are based upon soils, topography, geology, and other factors necessary to sustain the plant community. Each plan includes an implementation timetable which summarizes ongoing management needs and a statement on funding. Long-term management costs (e.g. invasive species treatments, prescribed fire, and monitoring/evaluation) will be covered by a combination funding sources, including, but not limited to, ENRTF, Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF), federal grants, and other funds as appropriated. Each AMP is kept in a DNR internal shared electronic filing system accessible to all SNA staff.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

The DNR follows Minnesota Statutes 84.033 which require that any land acquired for designation as a SNA must have county board approval as prescribed under MS 97A.145.

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

As part of the DNR acquisition process, all SNA acquisitions are required to have approval of the Ecological and Water Resources Division Director and land conveyances are accepted by the Director or Deputy Director of Division of Lands and Minerals who have delegated authority to approve this for the Commissioner.

#### **Conservation Easement Acquisition**

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

Same process as that noted above for fee title.

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified. Include a link to the plan if one is available.

Same as those noted above for fee title.

3. For any conservation easement acquired, a restoration and management must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

Same as those noted above for fee title.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

Same as noted above for fee title.

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction. A copy of the written approval should be provided to LCCMR.

Same as noted above for fee title

6. Provide a statement addressing how conservation easements will address specific water quality protection activities, such as keeping water on the landscape, reducing nutrient and contaminant loading, protecting groundwater, and not permitting artificial hydrological modifications.

SNA's goal is to protect existing high quality, high functioning native plant communities that currently are providing multiple water quality benefits. In addition, the easement terms and the Adaptive Management Plan executed assures that the plant community health is sustained, thus they inherently do an excellent job of keeping the water on the landscape, reducing nutrient and contaminant loading, and protecting groundwater. In addition, use of pesticides on the easement is prohibited without approval of the DNR. The easement terms also prohibit artificial hydrological modifications by prohibiting excavation, cultivations, drainage, filling, and irrigation.

7. Describe the long-term monitoring and enforcement program for conservation easements acquired on parcels by your organization, including explanations of the process used for calculating conservation easement monitoring and enforcements costs, the process used for annual inspection and reporting on monitoring and enforcement activities, and the process used to ensure perpetual funding and implementation of monitoring and enforcement activities.

The policy of the DNR is to protect both the conservation values of the property protected by these easements and the investment of the state in those interests. Elements of this stewardship include the creation of baseline property reports, enforcement protocols, regular compliance monitoring, record keeping and reporting, and maintaining effective working relationships with the owners of these easement properties. SNA implements this policy by following DNR Operational Order #128 "Conservation Easement Stewardship" in addition to the "Ecological and Water Resources Division Conservation Easement Stewardship Plan and Guidelines". This operational order and supporting division guidance calls for annual landowner contacts as well as on-the-ground site evaluations once every three years if no violations are found. If a violation is found, monitoring would occur annually until the violation is corrected.

Budgeted into this work plan is funding to be deposited into the DNR's Conservation Easement Stewardship Account dedicated to the perpetual monitoring and enforcement of conservation easements. The dedicated stewardship funds will provide the support needed for long-term, ongoing monitoring and minor enforcement activities of Scientific and Natural Area easements acquired under this proposal. For each specific SNA easement, initial investment dollars are determined by using a DNR approved Conservation Easement Stewardship Calculator, which estimates the annual expenses and the investment needed to generate annual income sufficient to cover these expenses in perpetuity.

Funds for this activity will be deposited into the established conservation easement stewardship account and Minnesota Management & Budget protocols will be adhered to. After the closing of each SNA easement acquired with this appropriation, the calculated easement stewardship funds will be deposited into this account. Once funds are deposited and interest begins to accrue, this accrued interest will be applied towards actual expenses tied to annual landowner contact, regular compliance monitoring, record keeping and minor enforcement protocols.

### **Restoration**

1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.

All restoration/enhancement-related activities done with this appropriation are on lands designated as SNA which the state owns in fee or easement.

2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.

Each restoration/enhancement project will be based upon an ecological restoration and management plan and/or project plan with goals for reconstructing plant communities that are native to the site that are based upon soils, topography, geology, and other factors necessary to sustain the plant community. Each plan includes an implementation timetable which summarizes ongoing management needs. Each restoration and management plan and project plan is kept in a DNR internal shared electronic filing system accessible to all SNA staff.

3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines" in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement.

The SNA Program follows or exceeds the recommendations found in the BWSR "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines". SNA restorations typically follow the current BOWSR Guidelines, including Project Guidance, Plant Community Restoration, Temporary Cover and Forest/Woodlands. The SNA Program follows the general direction of the BWSR Guidelines for "Recommended Steps for Obtaining Plant Materials", and has additional and more restrictive requirements for restoration material sources. Specifically, SNA restorations use seeds of a local ecotype, collected from onsite or within 25 miles. Restoration and management of DNR lands are governed by DNR Operational Order #124 on "Plant Material Standards for Native Plant Community Restoration" and #130 on "Pollinator Habitat" (which include BMPs).

4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.

Long-term management costs (e.g. invasive species treatments, prescribed fire/disturbance, and monitoring/evaluation) will be covered by a combination of funding sources, including, but not limited to, ENRTF, Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF), federal grants, and other funds as appropriated.

5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.

DNR has a standing general contract with CCM under which the SNA Program often does project or activity specific agreements. For restoration and site improvement projects, CCM has been and will continue to be used when appropriate for hand seed harvest, invasive species treatment, prescribed burning, and will be considered on restoration projects for post-planting weed control.

6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.

Plant community reconstruction and rehabilitation projects will be evaluated and a report submitted to the LCCMR to ascertain how well the native plants have been established and non-natives controlled. Each evaluation report will include a summary of management plan outcomes, activities completed through the project, map of the project area, statement of ongoing management needs and funding, and summary of the evaluation.

## PROGRAM MANAGER QUALIFICATIONS

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**Project Manager:** Judy Schulte, Prairie Biologist (Interim until SNA Unit Supervisor position is filled)

**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 and management of several previous LCCMR & LSOHC projects, including:

- ML 2010 ENRTF Scientific and Natural Areas & Native Prairie Restoration, Enhancement & Acquisition
- ML 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017-2018 ENRTF Native Prairie Stewardship & Native Prairie Bank Acquisition
- ML 2011, 2013-2018 ENRTF Scientific and Natural Areas Acquisition and Restoration
- ML2010-2018 OHF Accelerated Prairie Restoration & Enhancement of DNR Lands
- ML2011-2018 OHF WMA, SNA & NPB Easement Acquisition
- ML2014-2018 OHF Accelerated Native Prairie Bank Protection

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 responsible for the 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.

