

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

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 250-G

Native Prairie Bank Conservation Easements and Landowner Assistance

Category: G. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Sub-Category:

Total Project Budget: \$ 3,828,000

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

Summary:

Native Prairie Bank will provide prairie technical assistance, restore and enhance 1,170 acres, and acquire 300 acres through permanent conservation easements and 300 acres through 15-year agreements from willing sellers.

Name: Judy Schulte

Sponsoring Organization: MN DNR

Title: Prairie Biologist

Department: Division of Ecological and Water Resources

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Location

Region: Central, Northwest, Southwest, Southeast

County Name: Statewide

City / Township:

Alternate Text for Visual:

Map shows permanent protection in Prairie Plan and Southeast priority areas. Lease pilot area is highlighted along Minnesota River between Redwood-Renville Counties. Photos show woody encroachment in pilot area.

<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
Native Prairie Bank Conservation Easements and Landowner Assistance

PROJECT TITLE: Native Prairie Bank Conservation Easements and Landowner Assistance

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Native Prairie Bank (NPB) has a proven track record of working with landowners to enhance and protect native prairie while leaving the land in private ownership. Through this proposal, a variety of prairie technical assistance options will be provided to landowners and practitioners. Native prairie restoration and enhancement activities will be implemented on 870 acres of permanently protected NPBs and on 300 acres of temporarily protected native prairie tied to a new “pilot” prairie revitalization project. In addition to the 300 acres protected through 15 year lease agreements with the “pilot” project, this proposal would also permanently protect another 300 acres through the acquisition of NPB conservation easements from willing sellers. The high quality native prairie targeted through this proposal provides the very unique habitat required by many of Minnesota’s rare, threatened and endangered species. Though threats to native prairie are widespread, degradation is becoming one of the most concerning as the costs associated with management of native prairie, often times tied to rough terrain, can be financially exhausting for landowners, requiring them to choose between managing their prairie or paying their child’s college tuition.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: *Prairie Landowner Assistance, Outreach and Existing NPB Stewardship*

Private landowners and other practitioners will increase their stewardship of native prairie as a result of this project’s workshops, field days, one-on-one consultations, etc. The Prairie Landowner Network created through ML18 will be continued in cooperation with Conservation Corps of Minnesota (CCM) as a way to connect prairie landowners through social media, email, newsletters, training opportunities, etc. in an effort to keep landowners up-to-date on the best management strategies. Landowner enrollment in Native Prairie Tax Exemption will be increased and coordination with assessors improved through the completion of the online tools initiated in ML17.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$605,310

Outcome	Completion Date
1. ~10 workshops/field days for prairie landowners & practitioners (~1000 people)	6/30/2022
2. consultations, guidance, mgmt. asst., etc. to ~65 landowners	6/30/2022
3. ~20 enrollees in Prairie Landowner Network	6/30/2022
4. ~25 prairie stewardship plans provided to prairie landowners (~2000 acres)	6/30/2022
5. ~330 landowners enrolled in Native Prairie Tax Exemption with support of web-app.	6/30/2022
6. ~5 baseline property reports for NPB easements	6/30/2022
7. monitoring and stewardship of ~ 30 NPB easements	6/30/2022

Activity 2: *870 Acres of Native Prairie Habitat Enhancement & Restoration*

Restoration and enhancement activities, such as seed collection, site preparation, planting, invasive species control/removal, boundary signing, site cleanup, prescribed burns (or alternative prescribed disturbance, such as haying, mowing or grazing, where appropriate) and monitoring will be completed on NPBs. Adaptive Management/Ecological Monitoring will occur to evaluate whether the objectives of management were met and to contribute to future management decisions. These activities will be carried out via landowner agreements, DNR staff, CCM, volunteers, and/or contractors.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$1,154,769

Outcome	Completion Date
1. ~20 acres of prairie reconstruction (restoration)	6/30/2022
2. ~350 acres of woody removal & invasive species treatment	6/30/2022
3. ~ 500 acres of prescribed burns	6/30/2022
4. NPB easement boundary signs & development work on ~6 NPB sites	6/30/2022
5. adaptive management/ecological monitoring on ~18 NPB sites	6/30/2022



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)
2019 Main Proposal
Native Prairie Bank Conservation Easements and Landowner Assistance

Activity 3: Acquisition and Stewardship of 300 acres of Native Prairie Bank Easements

DNR-administered permanent NPB conservation easements will be acquired from willing sellers on high quality native prairie, which will include no more than 30% non-prairie as necessary to improve prairie management. Payment rates are determined by authorizing law, M.S. 84.96, as applied according to department policies. Baseline Property Reports will be completed on all approximately 6 NPBs acquired. 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). Funding will be deposited into a conservation easement stewardship account dedicated to perpetual monitoring and enforcement on NPB easements acquired with this proposal.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$1,123,125

Outcome	Completion Date
1. acquisition of about 300 acres NPB conservation easements	6/30/2022
2. ~6 baseline property reports for NPB easements	6/30/2022
3. dollars deposited into conservation easement stewardship account (~6 easements)	6/30/2022

Activity 4: Pilot Prairie Revitalization Project

This pilot project will target the well-known ecological hotspot along the Minnesota River between Redwood & Renville Counties that is losing native prairie due to extensive woody encroachment. In exchange for completing woody removal projects to revitalize their prairie, landowners will agree to a 15 year lease that would place similar protection restrictions on the prairie as a NPB easement and will receive a Prairie Stewardship Plan to help them manage the prairie as it recovers. Landowners will be asked to consider permanent protection options once prairie has recovered and its true quality assessed.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$944,796

Outcome	Completion Date
1. prairie protection via 15 year lease agreement on about 300 acres (~6 agreements)	6/30/2022
2. ~300 acres of woody removal (with potential for follow-up prescribed burns)	6/30/2022
3. ~6 prairie stewardship plans provided to prairie landowners (~300 acres)	6/30/2022

III. PROJECT PARTNERS:

A. Partners receiving ENRTF funding

Name	Title	Affiliation	Role
Marilyn Bernhardson Kristy Zajac	District Manager District Technician	Redwood SWCD	Assist on "Pilot" Project contract management and lease monitoring.

B. Partners NOT receiving ENRTF funding

Name	Affiliation	Role
Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan Local Technical Team Members	SWCD's, NRCS, DNR, USFWS, TNC, Pheasants Forever, etc.	Landowner outreach will be coordinated with Prairie Plan partners.

IV. LONG-TERM- IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING: Currently, DNR holds 11,600 acres of NPB easements, which accounts for 40% of the MBS mapped native prairie protected through conservation easements statewide. If NPB aimed to protect 40% of the MN Prairie Conservation Plan native prairie easement protection goals, NPB would need to acquire an additional 44,000 acres. At the same time, without active natural resource management prairie values will be lost. Thus NPB could utilize ENRTF support of about \$5M per year to sustain and protect native prairie.

V. TIME LINE REQUIREMENTS: Three years (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2022) provides adequate time for acquisition negotiation, outreach initiatives and multiple field seasons for restoration/enhancement activities.

2019 Proposal Budget Spreadsheet

Project Title: *Native Prairie Bank Conservation Easements and Landowner Assistance*

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Personnel: 6.4 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 ~15-25% fringe benefits as per state union contracts: 0.4 FTE (for 2 years) acquisition & management coordinators and prairie biologist (~\$64,339) 4.3 FTE (for 2 years) specialists & technicians (~\$586,650) 1.7 FTE (for 2 years) laborers & seasonal crews (~\$130,500)	\$ 781,489
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts: <i>Professional/technical:</i> adaptive management monitoring (~35 sites), private prairie stewardship plans (~35 plans) (~\$348,000). Soil & Water Conservation District administration of MN River Prairie Revitalization Pilot Program woody removals (~\$15,000). <i>Conservation Corp of MN:</i> Prairie Landowner Network (1 individual placement) (\$76,000), prescribed burning, invasives, woody removal and seed harvest (crew contracts) (\$177,000) <i>Service contracts:</i> prescribed burning, invasives, woody removal, seed harvest (\$1,055,000) For all contracts, priority is given to CCM and contractors will be selected following state procurement & bidding processes	\$ 1,671,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Activity 1: Outreach materials, baseline property report printing (\$4,000) Activity 2: herbicide, posts, signs, safety supplies, equipment repair/parts, seed cleaning/testing, field tools, exclosure fence for monitoring (\$26,550) Activity 3: Deed & baseline property report printing, field tools (\$1,100)	\$ 31,650
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements): DNR Native Prairie Bank conservation easement acquisition (300 acres) including real estate transaction costs	\$ 880,000
Travel: DNR fleet charges (for operation of trucks, cars, tractors, and other specialized equipment) & instate travel costs (as per state contracts)	\$ 206,800
Additional Budget Item: Conservation Corps MN Individual placement MNIT computer rental/support	\$ 1,500
Additional Budget Item: Conservation Easement Stewardship account	\$ 120,000
Additional Budget Item: MNIT Services for Prairie Tax Exemption Database - includes county assessor access	\$ 30,000
Additional Budget Item: <i>DNR's Direct & Necessary Costs</i> (\$105,561) pay for activities that are directly related to and necessary for accomplishing appropriated programs/projects. Direct and necessary costs cover HR support (~\$18,794), Safety Support (~\$3,893), Financial Support (~\$31,070), Communication support (~\$5,005), IT Support (~\$42,564), and Planning Support (~\$4,235).	\$ 105,561
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 3,828,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: N/A	\$ -	N/A
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.	\$ -	N/A
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)	\$ -	N/A
Past and Current ENRTF Appropriation: ENRTF 2013 Prairie Stewardship and NPB Acquisition (\$750,000)-Completed ENRTF 2015 Prairie Stewardship and NPB Acquisition (\$3,325,000)-Balance:\$959,643 encumbered & \$1,182,130 unexpended. ENRTF 2017 Prairie Stewardship and NPB Acquisition (\$2,675,000)-Balance: \$101,747 encumbered & \$2,540,189 ENRTF 2018 Private Native Prairie Conservation through NPB (\$2,000,000)-Pending	\$ 8,750,000	Spent: \$1,966,291 Legally Obligated: \$1,061,390 Unspent: \$3,722,319 Pending: \$2,000,000
Other Funding History: OHF 2014 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB portion=\$210,500)-Balance: \$55,647 OHF 2014 NPB-RIM Acquisition (NPB portion=\$3,000,000)-Balance: \$106,418 OHF 2015 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB portion=\$125,000)-Balance:\$66,651 OHF 2015 Accelerated Native Prairie Protection (\$3,740,000)-Balance: \$2,257,082 OHF 2016 Accelerated Native Prairie Protection (\$2,541,000)-Balance: \$2,529,676 OHF 2016 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB Portion=\$215,000)-Balance:\$173,526 OHF 2017 Accelerated Native Prairie Protection (\$2,481,000)-Balance:\$2,480,481 OHF 2017 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB Portion=\$127,000)-\$123,042 OHF 2018 Accelerated Native Prairie Protection (\$1,490,000)-Pending OHF 2018 Prairie Restoration & Enhancement (NPB Portion=\$179,360)-Pending	\$ 14,108,860	Spent: \$4,646,977 Unspent (includes legally obligated): \$7,792,523 Pending: \$1,669,360

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
NOTES: 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

Native Prairie Bank Conservation Easements and Landowner Assistance

Proposed Easement Acquisition Sites & Pilot Prairie Revitalization Target Area

Legend



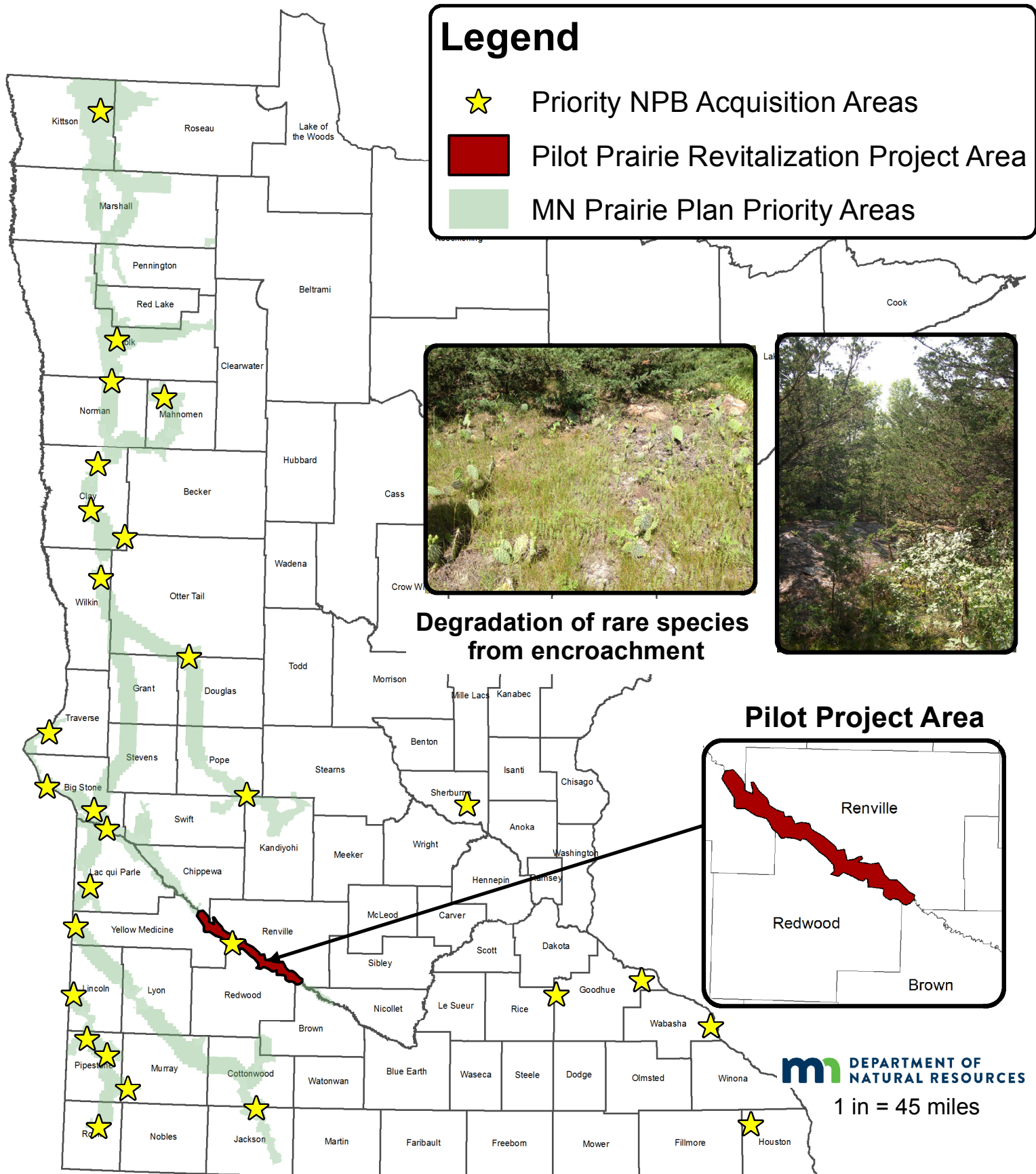
Priority NPB Acquisition Areas



Pilot Prairie Revitalization Project Area



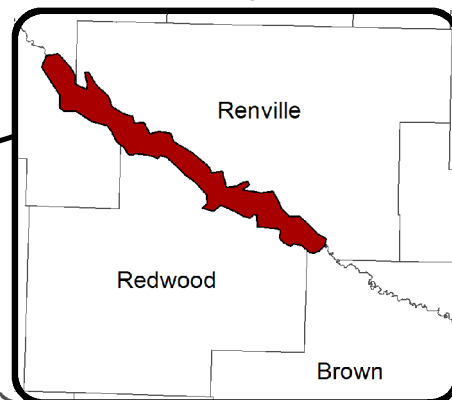
MN Prairie Plan Priority Areas



Degradation of rare species from encroachment



Pilot Project Area



mn DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

1 in = 45 miles

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

Acquisition/Restoration Information:

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.

Eligibility for Native Prairie Bank is established in both M.S. 84.96 and MN Rule 6136.09. To qualify, land must be covered by native prairie vegetation and have never been plowed. Eligible lands are prioritized based on factors including: size, quality and diversity of the native prairie habitat; occurrence of, or suitable habitat for rare species; location relative to other native prairie and/or public land; and potential for long-term habitat management and enhancement. MBS data is the foundation for many of these evaluation factors. Native Prairie Bank uses the "Native Prairie Bank Evaluation Form" to evaluate and score individual projects.

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.

[Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan](#)
[Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025](#)
[Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda](#)
[Minnesota's Statewide Conservation Plan](#)

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.

Each parcel acquired as a new NPB will have a Prairie Stewardship Plan. Prairie Stewardship Plans include, 1) a resource inventory and assessment of all the lands native plant communities or restored to plant communities that would have been native to the site, 2) landowner and DNR's goals, and 3) prairie management alternatives/recommendations. The goals for the NPB'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 ecological monitoring/evaluation) will be covered by a combination of funding sources, including, but not limited to, the landowner, ENRTF, Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF), federal grants, and other funds as appropriated. Each Prairie Stewardship Plan is kept in a DNR internal shared electronic filing system accessible to all SNA staff along with a copy given to the landowner.

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.

DNR policy is to notify the county assessor prior to easement closing, however county board approval is not requested.

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.

As part of the DNR acquisition process, all NPB 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 the Division of Lands and Minerals who have delegated authority to approve this for the Commissioner.

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.

Native Prairie Bank's goal is to protect existing high quality, high functioning native prairie that currently is providing multiple water quality benefits. In addition, the easement terms and the Prairie Stewardship Plan they are required to follow assures that the prairie 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. Native Prairie Bank 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 Native Prairie Bank easements acquired under this proposal. For each specific Native Prairie Bank 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 Native Prairie Bank 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 activities done with this appropriation are on DNR-owned perpetual Native Prairie Bank conservation easements administered by the SNA Program.

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 project will be based upon a Native Prairie Stewardship Plan (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". NPB restorations typically follow the current BWSR Guidelines, including Project Guidance, Plant Community Restoration, and Temporary Cover. 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, all restorations on Native Prairie Banks use seeds/plants of local ecotypes, collected from onsite or within 30 miles. Restoration and management of DNR lands are governed by DNR Operational Order #124 on "Plant Material Standards for Native Plant Community Restoration" and DNR Operational Order #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, and monitoring/evaluation) will be covered by a combination funding sources, including, but not limited to, the landowner, 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 projects, CCM has been and will continue to be used when appropriate for hand seed harvest. CCM also does some invasive species control on NPBs 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.

Restoration 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. The evaluation reports include a summary of management plan outcomes, activities completed through the project, map of the project area, a statement of ongoing management needs and funding, and a summary of the evaluation.

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 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.