

2005 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2008

PROJECT TITLE: Prairie Stewardship of Private Lands (05d)

PROJECT MANAGER: Jason Garms

AFFILIATION: MN DNR, Ecological Resources, Scientific and Natural Areas Program

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FUNDING SOURCE: Minnesota Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2005, First Special Session, Chap.1 Art. 2, Sec. 11, Subd. 05(d).

\$50,000 the first year and \$50,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources to develop stewardship plans and implement prairie management on private prairie lands on a cost-share basis with private or federal funds. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2008, at which time the project must be completed and final products delivered, unless an earlier date is specified in the work program.

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$100,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Native prairie is Minnesota's most threatened natural habitat. Less than 1%, or less than 170,000 acres, of the State's native prairie survives – and much of it is privately owned. Many of these remaining prairies have not received sustainable management activities since European settlement and subsequent removal of nature processes. In the absence of active management prairies frequently deteriorate from encroachment by woody species or competition from non-native plants. Landowners are almost always interested in improving the stewardship of their native prairie remnant, but often lack the expertise or resources to identify and address this backlog of needed management.

One project objective was to provide native prairie landowners with comprehensive Prairie Stewardship Plans that offer long-term guidance for the care of their native prairie. Natural resource professionals prepared plans that inventoried and evaluated the landowner's native prairie and other land resources, identified their goals and objectives, and recommended ecologically sound management strategies. Both DNR Prairie Specialists and qualified private-sector prairie professionals, who competitively bid their services, assisted landowners with completion of their Prairie Stewardship Plans. A total of 37 stewardship plans were written covering 4,459 total acres, 1,313 acres of which were prairie.

The second project objective was to implement existing Prairie Stewardship Plans. Landowners were able to request cost-share assistance for habitat improvement practices which they implemented themselves, or had DNR prairie staff carryout practices they did not feel qualified to do. Example habitat projects included prescribed burns, woody encroachment removal, invasive species control, and prairie reconstruction. In many cases, DNR packaged groups of projects, such as prescribed burns, into larger contracts for professional vendors to competitively bid on, thereby maximizing efficiencies and minimizing costs for landowners. A total of 23 stewardship projects were completed covering 1,043 total acres, which included 469 acres of which were prairie.

Since inception of the Scientific and Natural Area's Prairie Stewardship Program in 1999 there have been 144 Prairie Stewardship Plans written for prairie landowners. Future plans for the

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Prairie Stewardship Program include surveying past stewardship plan recipients to determine if plans have been fully implemented, and if not, what have been the obstacles to setting those plans in motion.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Copies of Stewardship Plans have been provided to local DNR managers and used by the landowners as they work with other conservation agencies and programs.

One landowner participating in the cost-share assistance for habitat improvement took it upon himself to highlight the project in his local newspaper. The article was published in the January 24, 2008 issue of the Advocate Tribune (Granite Falls, MN). A scan of this article has been included with the final report.

LCCMR 2005 Work Program Final Report

Date of Report: June 30, 2008.
LCCMR 2005 Work Program Final Report

I. PROJECT TITLE: Prairie Stewardship of Private Lands (05d)

Project Manager: Jason Garms
Affiliation: DNR Ecological Resources, Scientific and Natural Areas Program
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Total Biennial LCMR Project Budget:	LCMR Appropriation:	\$100,000
	Minus Amount Spent:	<u>\$99,917</u>
	Equal Balance:	\$83

Legal Citation: ML 2005, First Special Session, Chap.1 Art 2, Sec. 11, Subd. 05d.

Appropriation Language: \$50,000 the first year and \$50,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources to develop stewardship plans and implement prairie management on private prairie lands on a cost-share basis with private or federal funds. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2008, at which time the project must be completed and final products delivered, unless an earlier date is specified in the work program.

II and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY

Native prairie is Minnesota's most threatened natural habitat. Less than 1%, or less than 170,000 acres, of the State's native prairie survives – and much of it is privately owned. Many of these remaining prairies have not received sustainable management activities since European settlement and subsequent removal of nature processes. In the absence of active management prairies frequently deteriorate from encroachment by woody species or competition from non-native plants. Landowners are almost always interested in improving the stewardship of their native prairie remnant, but often lack the expertise or resources to identify and address this backlog of needed management.

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IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1: Landowner Motivation Through Stewardship Plans

A total of 6 private sector consultants were hired through a competitive bidding process. ETF funds financed these consultants and resulted in Prairie Stewardship Plans for approximately 37 landowners within the prairie region of the State and covered 1313 acres of native prairie. The Prairie Stewardship Plans were designed as whole farm/property plans to include the prairie and surrounding land uses. In doing so the plans directly impacted 4459 acres of private land in total.

Final Summary Budget for Result 1:	LCMR Budget	\$ <u>50,000</u>
	Balance	\$ <u>0</u>

Result 2: Habitat improvement projects

Description: ETF funds financed 23 prairie habitat improvement projects in the prairie region of the State. These 23 projects benefited 469 native prairie acres and impact a total of 1043 acres of prairie and grassland habitat. Projects were implemented through DNR staff, landowners via cost-share support, and State administered contracts with private sector consultants. Projects included 10 prescribed burns, 7 woody invasion removal projects, 4 prairie harvests and reconstructions, and 2 exotic species treatment projects.

Final Summary Budget for Result 2:	LCMR Budget	\$ <u>50,000</u>
	Balance	\$ <u>83</u>

V. TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET:

BUDGET – All Results

Personnel:	\$15,000
Professional/technical contracts - Performance based contracts with private sector professionals	\$50,000

Project contracts - for prescribed burning, restoration, herbicide spraying, etc	\$15,000
Payment to landowners – for implementing management practices	\$17,500
Supplies - project materials, herbicide, fuel, personal safety equipment, etc	\$1,000
Vehicles - Project related DNR Fleet/vehicle costs	\$1,500
TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET	\$100,000

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$3,500: None

Explanation of Personnel costs:

- Funds were used to extend existing DNR seasonal crews or natural resource technicians and specialists undertaking projects in this work program. These positions are unclassified and classified (all AFSME employees must be classified as per contract).
- Only time spent on approved projects were charged to these funds. Without these funds, none of the projects in this work program would be completed. They are an acceleration of related initiatives.
- To implement projects in the work program, specialized skills (prescribed burning, knowledge of sites and management implications) were often required. DNR employees with the training, experience and certifications required to do these specialized tasks were used to directly implement these projects, and work with landowners and contractors to design, direct and certify completion of projects they carry out.
- Contracts with outside vendors were used when possible, but contractors were not available for some projects.

VI. PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SPENDING

Other Funds being spent during the Project Period:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Landowner Incentive Program (pending request)	US FWS	\$100,000
Habitat Corridors Partnership Phase III, Habitat Restoration and Management 2K - Prairie Management	LCMR	\$133,000
Prairie Bank easement development	bonding	\$50,000

Required Match (if applicable): None

Past Spending:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Landowner Incentive Program	US FWS	\$300,000
2003 LCMR Forest & Prairie Stewardship (parts of Result 1 & Result 3)	Trust Fund	\$245,000

VII. PROJECT PARTNERS:

- **Landowner Incentive Program:** Faith Balch, Landowner Incentive Program Coordinator, DNR Ecological Resources

- **Landowners:** Approximately 25 private prairie landowners – Landowners contribute 10% or more in cash or in-kind services on stewardship plan implementation
- **DNR Area Wildlife Managers & Ecologists:** Work with stewardship plan consultants on plan development, and landowners on plan implementation

VIII. DISSEMINATION:

Copies of Stewardship Plans are provided to local DNR managers and used by the landowner with other agencies and programs.

IX. LOCATION:

The 'prairie' portions of Minnesota. This includes: Anoka, Becker, Benton, Big Stone, Blue Earth, Brown, Carver, Chippewa, Chisago, Clay, Cottonwood, Dakota, Dodge, Douglas, Faribault, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Grant, Hennepin, Houston, Isanti, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Kittson, Lac qui Parle, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Mahnomen, Marshall, Martin, Meeker, Mower, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Norman, Olmsted, Otter Tail, Pennington, Pipestone, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Redwood, Renville, Rice, Rock, Scott, Sherburne, Sibley, Stearns, Steele, Stevens, Swift, Todd, Traverse, Wabasha, Wadena, Waseca, Washington, Watonwan, Wilkin, Winona, Wright, and Yellow Medicine Counties.

X. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

3 years were needed to complete the project. The July 1 start date reduced much of what could be accomplished the first field season. The extension provided two full field seasons to accomplish the prairie planning and development work as follows; 25% will be completed by January 30, 2006; 50% by January 30, 2007; 75% by January 30, 2008, and 100% by June 30, 2008. The additional year allowed for efficient use of the cost share dollars.

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic work program progress reports to be submitted not later than January 30, 2006, July 30, 2006, January 30, 2007, July 30, 2007, and January 30, 2008. A final work program report and associated products will be submitted by June 30, 2008.

Attachment A: Budget Detail for 2005 Projects

Proposal Title: : Prairie Stewardship of Private Lands # (05d)

Project Manager Name: Jason Garms

LCMR Requested Dollars: \$100,000

2005 LCMR Proposal Budget	Result 1 Budget:	Result 2 Budget:			
BUDGET ITEM	Stewardship Plans	Habitat Projects	TOTAL FOR BUDGET ITEM	Total Spent	Balance
PERSONNEL: Staff Expenses, wages, salaries – DNR technician or specialist, 0.15 FTE/yr		\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$0
Contracts					
Professional/technical: Performance based contracts with private sector professionals	\$50,000		\$50,000	\$50,000	\$0
Project contracts - for prescribed burning, restoration, herbicide spraying, etc.		\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$0
Vehicles - Project related DNR Fleet/vehicle costs		\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$0
Supplies - project materials, herbicide, fuel, personal safety equipment, etc.		\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0
Payments to Landowners: cost-share agreements with landowners to implement stewardship plans		\$17,500	\$17,500	\$17,417	\$83
COLUMN TOTAL	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$99,917	\$83