

## **2009 Project Abstract**

For the Period Ending June 30, 2011

**PROJECT TITLE:** Minnesota's Habitat Conservation Partnership (HCP) - Phase VI 2o: Prairie Landscape Restoration: Oak, Savanna, Grasslands, and Wetlands

**PROJECT MANAGER:** Greg Hoch

**AFFILIATION:** Friends of the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District

**MAILING ADDRESS:** 26624 N Tower Rd

**CITY/STATE/ZIP:** Detroit Lakes, MN 56501

**PHONE:** 218-443-0476 (cell)

**E-MAIL:** gahoch@umn.edu

**WEBSITE:** <http://www.mnhabitatcorridors.org>

**FUNDING SOURCE:** Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

**LEGAL CITATION:** ML 2009, Chapter 143, Section 2, Subd. 4(e)2o

**APPROPRIATION AMOUNT:** \$50,000

### **Overall Project Outcome and Results**

This project restored approximately 40 acres of oak savanna on Kruger Waterfowl Production Area. Oak savanna is even rarer in Minnesota than tallgrass prairie and there are numerous plant and wildlife species that depend on this habitat. We removed invasive trees from these areas, restored an open, park-like structure to the vegetation, and created enough light gaps in the tree canopy to support a herbaceous understory. The biomass we removed was stacked and is drying. This fall the biomass will be chipped, hauled to the biomass burning plant in Benson, and converted to electrical power. This was a significant savings. Money that would have been spent burning or removing the biomass from the site was used for additional habitat work. After all the equipment is done at the site, FWS staff will overseed the areas where the trees were removed and any place equipment damaged the soil with a diverse mix of local ecotype grass and forb seed. The long-term maintenance of the site will be done through the FWS's fire management program.

Originally we planned to do both wetland and oak savanna restoration at the site. However, with the persistent rains over the period of this grant, we were not able to get heavy equipment into the wetlands to restore them. Therefore, we requested and were granted an amendment to spend the wetland funds on additional oak savanna work at the site.

# Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund 2009 Work Program Final Report

**Date of Report:** 6/17/2011

**Final Report**

**Date of Work Program Approval:** June 16, 2009

**Project Completion Date:** 11/2010

**I. PROJECT TITLE:** HCP Prairie Landscape Restoration: Oak, Savanna, Grasslands, and Wetlands

**Project Manager:** Greg Hoch  
**Affiliation:** Friends of the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District  
**Mailing Address:** 26624 N Tower Rd  
**City / State / Zip:** Detroit Lakes MN 56501  
**Telephone Number:** 218-443-0476 (cell)  
**E-mail Address:** gahoch@umn.edu  
**FAX Number:** 218-847-4156  
**Web Site Address:**

**Location:** *Becker County MN*

<b>Total Trust Fund Project Budget:</b>	<b>Trust Fund Appropriation</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>50,000</b>
	<b>Minus Amount Spent:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>50,000</b>
	<b>Equal Balance:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>0</b>

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2009, Chp. 143, Sec. 2, Subd. 4e2o

## **Appropriation Language:**

\$3,375,000 is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for the sixth appropriation for acceleration of agency programs and cooperative agreements. Of this appropriation, \$770,000 is for the Department of Natural Resources agency programs and \$2,605,000 is for agreements as follows: \$450,000 with Pheasants Forever; \$50,000 with Minnesota Deer Hunters Association; \$895,000 with Ducks Unlimited, Inc.; \$85,000 with National Wild Turkey Federation; \$365,000 with the Nature Conservancy; \$210,000 with Minnesota Land Trust; \$350,000 with the Trust for Public Land; \$100,000 with Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.; \$50,000 with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; and \$50,000 with Friends of Detroit Lakes Watershed Management District to plan, restore, and acquire fragmented landscape corridors that connect areas of quality habitat to sustain fish, wildlife, and plants. The United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service is a cooperating partner in the appropriation. Expenditures are limited to the project corridor areas as defined in the work program. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum habitat and facility management standards as determined by the commissioner of natural resources. This appropriation may not be used for the

purchase of residential structures, unless expressly approved in the work program. All conservation easements must be perpetual and have a natural resource management plan. Any land acquired in fee title by the commissioner of natural resources with money from this appropriation must be designated as an outdoor recreation unit under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.07. The commissioner may similarly designate any lands acquired in less than fee title. A list of proposed restorations and fee title and easement acquisitions must be provided as part of the required work program. All funding for conservation easements must include a long-term stewardship plan and funding for monitoring and enforcing the agreement. To the maximum extent practical, consistent with contractual easement or fee acquisition obligations, the recipients shall utilize staff resources to identify future projects and shall maximize the implementation of biodiverse, quality restoration projects in the project proposal into the first half of the 2010 fiscal year.

## **II. and III. Final Project Summary**

This project restored approximately 40 acres of oak savanna on Kruger Waterfowl Production Area (WPA). Oak savanna is even rarer in Minnesota than tallgrass prairie and there are numerous plant and wildlife species that depend on this habitat. We removed invasive trees from these areas, restored an open, park-like structure to the vegetation, and created enough light gaps in the tree canopy to support a herbaceous understory. The biomass we removed was stacked and is drying. This fall the biomass will be chipped, hauled to the biomass burning plant in Benson, and converted to electrical power. This was a significant savings. Money that would have been spent burning or removing the biomass from the site was used for additional habitat work. After all the equipment is done at the site, Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) staff will oversee the areas where the trees were removed and any place equipment damaged the soil with a diverse mix of local ecotype grass and forb seed. The long-term maintenance of the site will be done through the FWS's fire management program.

Originally we planned to do both wetland and oak savanna restoration at the site. However, with the persistent rains over the period of this grant, we were not able to get heavy equipment into the wetlands to restore them. Therefore, we requested and were granted an amendment to spend the wetland funds on additional oak savanna work at the site.

## **IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:**

**Result 1:** Oak savanna on Kruger WPA

### **Description:**

<b>Summary Budget Information for Result 1:</b>	<b>Trust Fund Budget:</b>	<b>\$ 50,000</b>
	<b>Amount Spent:</b>	<b>\$ 50,000</b>
	<b>Balance:</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>1.cut and remove trees from savanna</b>	12/2010	\$ 20,000
<b>2.burn trees</b>	12/2010	
<b>3.reseed savanna</b>	3/2011	

**Final Report Summary:** Friends members and FWS staff worked with the contractors to experiment several new pieces of equipment and techniques for cutting and moving the trees. This was an iterative process and each group learned quite a bit from the experience. This included how staff and the contractors can most effectively interact as well as which types of equipment did each part of the project most efficiently. The contractors were definitely faster and more efficient towards the end of the project once we had worked out the best methods. As we will continue to use these contractors for future work on LCCMR and other grants, we anticipate even more area treated per dollar invested. Because we have made significant investments in this site, the biological staff have already established several monitoring projects at the site to examine resprouting of trees, seeds germinating from the seed bank, and the herbaceous plant community after the seeding. This was one of the first large-scale savanna restoration projects in this part of Minnesota. We feel we learned a significant amount from this project and know how to approach similar projects at other sites on FWS, DNR, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) land. As the restoration matures and fire is reintroduced to the site, we will continue to learn about the effects of restoration and management that will inform all agencies in the area.

#### **V. TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET:**

**Personnel:** \$

**Contracts:** \$ 50,000 (Subsurface Contracting will do all savanna restoration work. USFWS staff will reseed the site after construction activities are done.)

**Equipment/Tools/Supplies:** \$

**Acquisition, including easements:** \$

**Travel:** \$

**Other:** \$

**TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET: \$50,000**

**Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$3,500:**

#### **VI. PROJECT STRATEGY:**

**A. Project Partners:** The project is coordinated by the Friends of the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District.

**B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy:** The goal of the project is to provide more habitat for savanna dependent plant and wildlife species, most of which are declining across Minnesota.

**C. Other Funds Proposed to be Spent during the Project Period:** We will be submitting NAWCA (North American Wetland Conservation Act) grants to match LCCMR dollars for similar restoration in the same general area of Becker County.

**D. Spending History:** We received \$40,000 ENRTF dollars in the previous phase of ENRTF funding for wetland restoration at nearby Waterfowl Production Areas the Wetland Management District. This is part of our overall plan to restore habitats within the district to presettlement vegetation conducive to producing high densities of migratory waterfowl and songbirds.

## **VII. DISSEMINATION:**

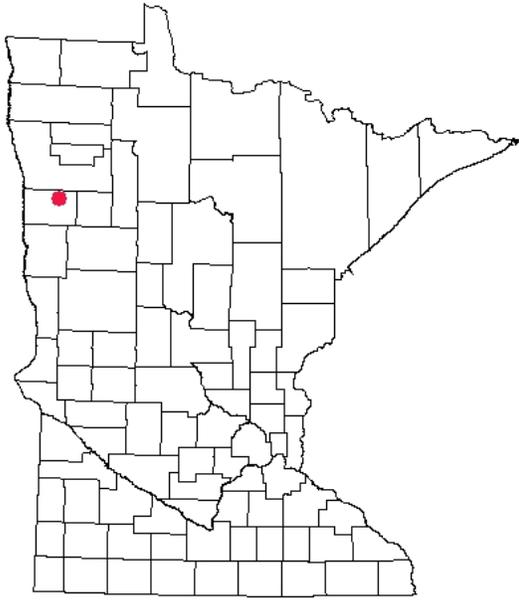
## **VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

Periodic work program progress reports will be submitted not later than 1 December 2009, 1 June 2010, and 1 Dec 2010. A final work program report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 1, 2011 as requested by the LCCMR.

## **IX. RESEARCH PROJECTS:**

**Figure 1.** Location of Kruger WPA in northeast Becker County and an aerial photo of the site.





**Figure 2.** Photos from 2008 (top) and 2010 (below) showing trees removed during the first half of this project. Approximately twice as much area of savanna was restored by the completion of the project.





Attachment A: Final Budget Detail for 2009 Project					
<b>Project Title:</b> <i>Prairie Landscape Restoration: Oak Savannas, Grasslands, and Wetlands</i>					
<b>Project Manager Name:</b> <i>Greg Hoch</i>					
<b>Trust Fund Appropriation:</b> \$ 50,000					
2009 Trust Fund Budget	<u>Result 1 Budget:</u>	<u>Amount Spent</u> <i>(9/10-9/30/2009)</i>	<u>Balance (5/2009)</u>	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>TOTAL BALANCE</b>
	<i>Oak Savanna Restoration on Kruger WPA</i>	0			
<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>					
<b>PERSONNEL: wages and benefits</b> <i>(List individual names, amount budgeted and %FTE; add rows as needed)</i>					
<b>Contracts</b>					
<b>Professional/technical</b> <i>(with whom?, for what?)</i>					
<b>Other contracts</b> <i>Strom Construction will do all wetland and savanna restoration work)</i>	50,000			\$50,000	50,000
<b>Strom (Subsurface Contracting)</b>		5,120	44,880		
		5,024	39,856		
		4,764	35,092		
		5,093	30,000		
		9,138	20,862		
		20,862	0		
<b>Other direct operating costs</b> <i>(for what? – be specific)</i>					
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>		<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>

