

2010 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2012

PROJECT TITLE: HCP Phase VI Supplemental – Prairie Management (2k)
PROJECT MANAGER: Jason Garms
AFFILIATION: MN DNR – Ecological Resources
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FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2010, Chp. 362, Sec. 2, Subd. 4f2k

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$63,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

A total of 127 acres of invasive species were controlled during the project (69 acres of woody removal, 58 acres of herbaceous invasive species treatments). Invasive tree species controlled includes Buckthorn, Siberian elm, Red cedar and Boxelder. Herbaceous invasive species treated include Spotted Knapweed, Leafy Spurge, and Crown-vetch. Projects were implemented by both private contractors and DNR crews. A total of 197 acres were burned on 2 SNA's and 2 Native Prairie Banks during the reporting period. All burns were completed by DNR crews as it remains difficult to hire qualified prescribed fire contractors. A total of 15 acres were reconstructed on the Langhei SNA and Mickelson Native Prairie Bank. All seeds were collected on the projects sites, and every attempt was made to collect a diversity of seeds. Both reconstructions are adjacent to native prairie; one reconstruction was a former row-crop field, and the other a site previously disturbed by installation of underground utilities. Data collection occurred on 4 different management projects. The data was loaded into the SNA Program's Adaptive Management Spatial Database (AMSD) for analysis and permanent documentation. Projects monitored included invasive species treatments and prescribed burning. As additional SNA management actions are implemented, and the data sets grow larger, AMSD will prove to be a valuable tool for continuous improvement of management methods.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Accomplishment Reports and press releases will be made available at <http://www.mnhabitatcorridors.org>

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund 2010 Work Program Final Report

Date of Report: August 13, 2012
Final Report
Date of Work Program Approval:
Project Completion Date: June 30, 2012

I. PROJECT TITLE: HCP Phase VI Supplemental – Prairie Management (2k)

Project Manager: Jason Garms
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Location: Areas of native prairie and associated grasslands on public and private land within Project Areas 1, 3, 6, 9, 10, & 11. See map of Scientific & Natural Areas and Native Prairie Bank easements in the project areas.

Total Trust Fund Project Budget:	ENRTF Appropriation	\$	63,000
	Minus Amount Spent:	\$	60,996
	Equal Balance:	\$	2,004

Legal Citation: M.L. 2010, Chp. 362, Sec. 2, Subd. 4f2k

Appropriation Language:

\$1,344,000 is added to Laws 2009, chapter 143, section 2, subdivision 4, paragraph (e), from the trust fund for the acceleration of agency programs and cooperative agreements. Of this appropriation, \$308,000 is to the commissioner of natural resources for agency programs and \$1,036,000 is for agreements as follows: \$425,000 with Ducks Unlimited, Inc.; \$50,000 with National Wild Turkey Federation; \$164,000 with the Nature Conservancy; \$102,000 with Minnesota Land Trust; \$200,000 with the Trust for Public Land; \$45,000 with Friends of Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District; and \$50,000 to the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe 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 an authorized 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.

II. and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:

A total of 127 acres of invasive species were control during the project (69 acres of woody removal, 58 acres of herbaceous invasive species treatments). Invasive tree species controlled includes Buckthorn, Siberian elm, Red cedar and Boxelder. Herbaceous invasive species treated include Spotted Knapweed, Leafy Spurge, and Crown-vetch. Projects were implemented by both private contractors and DNR crews. A total of 197 acres were burned on 2 SNA's and 2 Native Prairie Banks during the reporting period. All burns were completed by DNR crews as it remains difficult to hire qualified prescribed fire contractors. A total of 15 acres were reconstructed on the Langhei SNA and Mickelson Native Prairie Bank. All seeds were collected on the projects sites, and every attempt was made to collect a diversity of seeds. Both reconstructions are adjacent to native prairie; one reconstruction was a former row-crop field, and the other a site previously disturbed by installation of underground utilities. The habitat management projects came in a little under budget, which is the explanation for the \$2K that remains in the project budget. Date collection occurred on 4 different management projects. The data was loaded into the SNA Program's Adaptive Management Spatial Database (AMSD) for analysis and permanent documentation. Projects monitored included invasive species treatments and prescribed burning. As additional SNA management actions are implemented, and the data sets grow larger, AMSD will prove to be a valuable tool for continuous improvement of management methods.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result/Activity 1: Prairie Management and Restoration

Description:

The following prairie management and restoration activities will be targeted at Scientific and Natural Areas and Native Prairie Bank conservation easements as shown on the attached map.

Woody encroachment and Invasive species control – (\$32,000 for at least 45 acres of surrounding grassland/prairie benefited). Invasive woody species have invaded a significant number of native prairie tracts over the past 60+ years and is accelerating. Cutting scattered trees, fencerows, or small groves in prairies and grasslands can substantial improve areas of habitat for open grassland flora and fauna. Woody encroachment removal projects will be implemented by private contractors and DNR management crews.

Herbaceous invasive species threaten many of the few remaining native prairies, and new invasive species continue to emerge. Species such as Spotted Knapweed, Birdsfoot Trefoil, Leafy Spurge, and Crown Vetch quickly invade grassland, reducing diversity and habitat quality. Funds will be used to implement ‘best management practices’ for control and elimination of exotic species on remnant prairies and other priority grasslands

Prescribed burning – (\$19,000 for at least 170 acres burned) The importance of fire for keeping prairies healthy is widely recognized. However, limited spring and fall burn seasons, and the need for specialized training and equipment, make it challenging to meet all fire management needs. This activity builds on the success of past LCCMR accelerated prairie burning projects. DNR trained burn crews will implement prescribed fire projects, or certified private contractors when available.

Restoration/reconstruction – (\$9,000/up to 10 acres reconstructed) Today prairie remnants and other grasslands existing as fragments. Reconstruction efforts are needed to expand functionality of existing habitat, and buffer native plant communities from surrounding activities. Funds will be used to harvest and process seed, and plant native prairie species. Restoration projects will use only local ecotype seeds and plants.

Adaptive Management Monitoring – (\$3,000 to monitor and evaluate 3 project sites) The SNA program is starting to accelerate the use of adaptive management which requires ecological monitoring of managed sites to continuously inform and improve methods. Monitoring methods used will be those being developed in the LCCMR project “Accelerated Prairie Management, Survey, Acquisition and Evaluation” (ML 2008, Chap. 367, Sec.2, Subd. 3m).

Summary Budget Information for Result/Activity 1:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 63,000
Amount Spent: \$ 60,996
Balance: \$ 2,004

Deliverable/Outcome	Completion Date	Budget	Spent	Balance
1. 45 acres of woody and invasive species control	June 30, 2012	\$32,000	\$32,000	\$0
2. 170 acres prescribed burning	June 30, 2012	\$19,000	\$18,216	\$784
3. 10 acres of restoration/reconstruction	June 30, 2012	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$0
4. 3 projects monitored for adaptive management	June 30, 2012	\$3,000	\$1,780	\$1,220

Final Report Summary:

Woody encroachment and Invasive species control – (69 acres of woody removal, 58 acres of herbaceous invasive species treatments) A total of 127 acres of invasive species were control during the reporting period. Invasive tree species controlled includes Buckthorn, Siberian elm, Red cedar and Boxelder. Herbaceous invasive species treated include Spotted Knapweed, Leafy Spurge, and Crown-vetch. Projects were implemented by both private contractors and DNR crews.

Prescribed burning – (197 acres burned) A total of 197 acres were burned on 2 SNA’s and 2 Native Prairie Banks during the reporting period. All burns were completed by DNR crews as it remains difficult to hire qualified prescribed fire contractors.

Restoration/reconstruction – (15 acres restored) A total of 15 acres were reconstructed on the Langhei SNA and Mickelson Native Prairie Bank. All seeds were collected on the projects sites, and every attempt was made to collect a diversity of seeds. Both reconstructions are adjacent to native prairie; one reconstruction was a former row-crop field, and the other a site previously disturbed by installation of underground utilities.

Adaptive Management Monitoring – (4 sites monitored) Date collection occurred on 4 different management projects. The data was loaded into the SNA Program’s Adaptive Management Spatial Database (AMSD) for analysis and permanent documentation. Projects included invasive species treatments and prescribed burning. As additional SNA management actions are implemented, and the data sets grow larger, AMSD will prove to be a valuable tool for continuous improvement of management methods.

V. TOTAL ENRTF PROJECT BUDGET:

<u>Budget Item</u>	
*Personnel: DNR staff: NR Specialists, NR Technicians, NR laborers	\$33,500
Contracts: Competitive bid contracts with private vendors and cost-share grants to landowners for prescribed burning, prairie reconstructions, woody encroachment, etc	\$21,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: project supplies, vehicle fleet costs (e.g. ATV, Pick-up, ASV tracked vehicle)	\$8,500
Acquisition: none	\$0
Travel: none	\$0
Additional Budget Items: none	\$0
TOTAL ENRTF PROJECT BUDGET:	\$63,000

***Explanation of Personnel costs:**

- For classified and unclassified SNA program & other DNR staff paid almost exclusively with special project funds: up to ~ 0.4 FTE specialists and technicians; and ~ 0.3 FTE laborers and seasonal crews

- Only time spent on approved projects will be 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) are often required. DNR employees with the training, experience and certifications required to do these specialized tasks are 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 are used when possible, but contractors are not available for some projects.

TOTAL ENRTF PROJECT BUDGET: \$ 63,000

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

VI. PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners: While SNA staff will coordinate the management activities of this project, DNR staff from other programs and divisions will also assist with implementation. External partners that help by adding additional resources to implement activities include The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (e.g. sharing specialized equipment or access to restoration plant materials).

B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy: This project will help protect and perpetuate rare species, Species of Greatest Conservation Needs, and natural features of state significance within the Conservation Partnership project areas because of their importance and strategic value in protecting these rare resources. As a part of the State Outdoor Recreation system, all of these sites are managed as state SNAs that provide public access and opportunities to the public for nature observation and study. The SNA Long Range Plan has a goal of protection through SNA designation within each ecological subsection of five occurrences of each native plant community (NPC) and three occurrences of each natural heritage element found in that subsection. The Division of Ecological Resources is in the process of using the recently revised Native Plant Community Classification system to assess the extent of protection for each NPC per subsection - looking at both numbers of occurrences (NPC polygons) and acreage protected. This demonstrates a substantial need for more SNA land acquisition and habitat restoration for at least the next 2 decades. Towards this end, the program could readily utilize support from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust fund and/or the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council of \$2M to \$8M per biennium over this timeframe. Also see main proposal for Habitat Conservation Partnerships impacts and long-term strategy.

C. Other Funds Proposed to be Spent during the Project Period:

An estimated \$1,250 in-kind directly related to this project (e.g. general fund-supported project manager and Prairie Biologist staff time) is expected to be contributed to this project (but not tracked for reporting purposes). Approximately \$8,820 in Department Operations and Division Support charges accruing to this project will be covered by Division general funds or other eligible Division funds (see Attachment B.)

In addition, this Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund appropriation will be supplemented by other state funding (e.g. bonding and potentially L-SOHC, invasives species, heritage enhancement, and RIM match) and non-state funds (e.g. federal SWG, private funds, and partial landowner donations) as needed to complete prairie stewardship work during this project time frame. This additional funding is to accomplish acres, etc. not included in the deliverables listed in this work program.

D. Spending History: Past HCP spending; 2001: \$36,250 / 2003: \$0 / 2005: \$133,000 / 2007: \$75,000 / 2008: \$75,000

VII. DISSEMINATION: Accomplishment Reports and press releases will be made available at <http://www.mnhabitatcorridors.org>

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic progress reports are due December 1, 2010, June 1, 2011, and December 1, 2011 and the final work program report is due between June 30 and August 1, 2012. All reports will be generated using the HCP online reporting system.

IX. RESEARCH PROJECTS: NA

Attachment A: Budget Detail for M.L. 2010, Chp. 362, Sec. 2, Subd. 4f2k					
Project Title: 2k - Prairie Management – Habitat Conservation Partnership					
Project Manager Name: Jason Garms					
Trust Fund Appropriation: \$63,000					
2010 Trust Fund Budget	<u>Result 1 Budget:</u>	<u>Amount Spent</u> (6/30/12)	<u>Balance</u> (date)	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
	Prairie Management and Restoration				
BUDGET ITEM					
PERSONNEL: wages and benefits <i>(DNR NR Specialists, NR Technicians, NR laborers; a detailed personnel information is included in the Work Program - pg 3)</i>	33,500	31,798	1,702	33,500	1,702
Contracts					
Other contracts <i>(contracts for prescribed burning, prairie reconstructions, woody encroachment, etc. Also includes cost-share agreements for private land projects)</i>	21,000	21,000	0	21,000	0
Non-capital Equipment / Tools <i>(vehicle fleet costs (e.g. ATV, Pick-up, ASV tracked vehicle)</i>	7,500	7,493	7	7,500	7
Supplies <i>(herbicide, safety supplies, etc)</i>	1,000	705	295	1,000	295
COLUMN TOTAL	\$63,000	\$60,996	\$2,004	\$63,000	\$2,004