

WORK PROGRAM FINAL REPORT

Project - 3d2

Date of Report: June 30, 2004

Date of Next Status Report: NA

Date of Workprogram Approval: July 24, 2001

Project Completion Date: June 30, 2004

LCMR Work Program 2001

**I. Project Title: Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridors
Wetlands Reserve Program (3d2) Area 1- Aspen Parklands, Area 3-Prairie Borders, Area 6-Upper
Minnesota River, Area 7 – Alexandria Moraine, Area 9-Des Moines River Valley, and Area 10-
Southern Lakes**

This project has 2 parts. Part 1 (3d1) includes the expenditure of Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund dollars to contract with WRP technicians and purchase equipment and is administered by Ducks Unlimited (DU). Part 2 (3d2) is the accomplishment component of this project, administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and includes reporting on matching dollars and total acres enrolled. This cover page is used to acknowledge and collate the 2 separate reporting processes and reports appended here

Project Manager, 3d1: Roger Pederson
Affiliation: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Mailing Address: 18564 Esquire Way
Farmington, MN 55024
Telephone Number: (651) 460-2240
E-Mail: rpederson@ducks.org
Fax: (651) 460-2240
Web Address: mnducks.org

Project Manager, 3d2: Tim Koehler
Affiliation: United States Department of
Agriculture – Natural Resources
Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS)
Mailing Address: USDA-NRCS
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101
Telephone Number: (651) 602-7857
E-Mail: Tim.Koehler@mn.usda.gov
Fax: (651) 602-7914

Total Biennial Project Budget: \$350,000 - \$ 136,141 spent through the Minnesota Waterfowl Association = **\$213,859** balance transferred to Ducks Unlimited on March 14, 2003.

LEGAL CITATION: ML. 2001, First Special Session, Chapter 2, Section 14, Subd. 4(e) Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridors.

Appropriation Language: \$5,873,000 the first year and \$5,872,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for acceleration of agency programs and cooperative agreements with Minnesota Waterfowl Association, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., National Wild Turkey Federation, Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Land Trust, Trust for Public Land, U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Forest Service to restore and acquire fragmented landscape corridors that connect areas of quality habitat to sustain fish, wildlife, and plants. \$352,000 is for program coordination, corridor identification, and mapping. \$3,343,000 is for restoration and management activities in wildlife management areas, wetland habitat, lakes, wild rice beds, grasslands, and fisheries habitat. \$2,650,000 is for conservation easement programs on riparian areas, big woods forests, native prairies, and wetlands. \$5,400,000 is for habitat acquisition activities on prairies, riparian areas, and other fish and wildlife habitat corridors. As part of the required work program, criteria and priorities for planned acquisition and restoration activities must be submitted to the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources for review and approval. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum management standards as determined by the commissioner of natural resources. Any land acquired in fee title by the Commissioner of Natural Resources with money from this appropriation must be designated: (1) as an outdoor recreation unit under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.07; or (2) as provided in Minnesota Statutes, sections 89.018, subdivision 2, paragraph (a); 97A.101; 97A.125; 97C.001; and 97C.011. The commissioner may so designate any lands acquired in less than fee title.

II. and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:

During the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund grant project period (Phase I), over 22,479 habitat acres (including 7,646 wetland acres) were restored and protected via perpetual easements in 6 priority Habitat Corridor Partnership areas (Project Areas 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, & 10). Federal matching funds (for easement and habitat restoration costs) totaled \$29,477,155. Given federal staffing restrictions and NRCS workloads, contract tech support (via financial support from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund) was absolutely critical to increasing the amount of acres enrolled and restored in Minnesota's Wetlands Reserve Program. Increased WRP applications enabled Minnesota to rank second nationally in FY03 in securing federal funding for WRP.

Under this project, DU used Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund dollars to hire and supervise five contract technicians in four locations (Crookston, Fergus Falls, Detroit Lakes, and Albert Lea) to expand the federal Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) implementation in various Habitat Corridor Partnership project areas. Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund dollars was also used to purchase necessary field equipment (ATVs, survey equipment, etc.) for contract techs. This equipment has been donated to the NRCS to be used exclusively on the WRP for the useful life of the equipment.

WRP offers landowners the opportunity to take marginal lands out of agricultural production and restore them to their natural state. The landowner is paid the agricultural value for the property and up to 100% cost share for restoration activities. Once an easement is recorded, the landowner has one year to start the restoration and three years from recording to complete the restoration.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Funds received by LCMR were initially administered by The Minnesota Waterfowl Association (MWA). On March 14, 2003 DU became the recipient of the agreement with the Department of Natural Resources to administer the LCMR funds for the WRP. DU provided the administrative functions necessary to enter into contracts with qualified people to provide technical assistance to the WRP. The NRCS provided office space, vehicles and limited equipment needed for the contract technicians to perform their assigned duties. The NRCS and DU provided training and technical support to the contract technicians. The contract technicians are housed in project areas 1, 3

and 10 but were available to assist in other project areas as needed. NRCS set primary workload priorities for the contract technicians.

U reported on expenditures associated with the administration of the contract technicians while NRCS reported on WRP easement and restoration accomplishments. The unfunded applications NRCS has on file for WRP are a direct result of part of the contract technician's work. Restoration activities within these corridors are also direct results of these contract technicians' efforts.

NRCS has far exceeded its original commitment of \$4 million to place easements on 4,000 acres of land within the eleven designated Project Areas. Our efforts have focused on Project Areas #1, 3, 6, 7, 9 and 10. NRCS WRP funds may be spent in all Project Areas. The total for all Project Areas includes **\$29,477,155** of WRP funds expended on **22,479 acres** of easements and **7,646 acres** of wetland and upland habitat restored.

Result 1: Aspen Parklands Project Area #1

\$9,710,147 of WRP funds were expended in this project area including **10,602 acres** of easements and **4536 acres** restored to wetland and upland habitat. These activities were performed entirely in **Polk County, Minnesota**.

The corridor that was focused on was The Glacial Ridge Project area, east of Crookston. WRP easements and restoration activities were with The Nature Conservancy and numerous private landowners. This approximately 40,000 acre project is planned to become a USFWS designated National Wildlife Refuge in the future.

Result 2: Border Prairie Project Area #3

\$8,630,881 of WRP funds were expended in this project area including **6,246 acres** of easements and **551 acres** restored to wetland and upland habitat. These activities were conducted throughout the Project Area in the following counties: **Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Ottertail, Stevens and Wilkin**.

Result 3: Upper Minnesota River Project Area #6

\$1,203, 247 of WRP funds were expended in **Big Stone and Traverse Counties** in this Project Area. This included **782 acres** of easements and **673 acres** of wetland and upland habitat restored. A highlight of this Project Area is the WRP easement on the Moberg Group of landowners which was subsequently purchased by the USF&WS and named the Centennial Waterfowl Production Area. This project restored nearly 600 acres of wetland and upland habitat in 2003 and witnessed a tremendous amount and diversity of migrating and resident wildlife species in 2004.

Result 4: Alexandria Moraine Area #7

\$724,791 of WRP funds were expended in **Kandiyohi and Pope Counties** on **896 acres** of easements and **24 acres** of habitat restored.

Result 5: Des Moines River Valley Project Area #9

In Jackson County \$1,966,915 of WRP funds were expended on 750 acres of easements and 17 acres of habitat restored.

Result 6: Southern Lakes Project Area #10

\$7,241,174 of WRP funds were expended on 3204 acres of easements and 1818 acres of wetland and upland habitat restoration. Blue Earth, Freeborn, Rice, Steele and Waseca Counties is where the work was performed. Two special areas that were focused on include the Straight River Marsh project and The Grass Lake project.

The Straight River Marsh project is a 10,000-acre project containing a 1200 acre drained wetland basin. NRCS and its many partners currently have placed numerous easements in the area. This project lies in a linear corridor in Steele County.

The Grass Lake project is a 5000-acre project containing a 1300-acre drained wetland basin. NRCS and its many partners have placed easements on a number of acres in this project area. The Grass Lake project is three miles from a spatial corridor but falls within the Southern Lakes Project Area.

Sections V. through X. have been left alone as they were originally submitted. This has been done to document events and financial items as they occurred.

V. TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET:

March 14, 2003 to June 30, 2004

The balance of the budget was transferred to Ducks Unlimited for administration and will be reported by Ducks Unlimited.

TOTAL BUDGET: \$0

July 24, 2001 to March 13, 2003

TOTAL BUDGET: \$350,000

All Results: Personnel:	= \$ 262,600
All Results: Equipment:	= \$ 61,400
All Results: Development:	= \$ 0
All Results: Acquisition:	= \$ 0
All Results: Other:	= \$ 26,000
TOTAL	= \$ 350,000

Budget:

Personnel (includes 1 ½ year's salary and eligible benefits): \$262,600 – LCMR funds

	Allocated	Spent	Obligated
Civil Engineering Technician for the Southern Lakes region	\$ 57,600	\$8,700.26	\$0
Wetland Restoration Technician for the Aspen Parklands region	\$ 82,500	\$ 37,455.99	\$0
Wetland Restoration Technician for the Border Prairie region	\$ 88,125	\$ 36,100.63	\$0
Additional summer help	\$ 34,375	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$262,600	\$ 82,256.88	\$0

Equipment = \$61,400– LCMR funds

	Allocated	Spent	Obligated
Computer, software, accessories	\$11,000	\$ 7,975.05	\$ 4,585.30
Engineering survey equipment & ATV's	\$46,400	\$ 44,787.43	
Misc. field equipment, i.e. cell phones, lath, flags, etc.	\$4,000	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$61,400	\$52,762.48	\$ 57,347.78

Development – N/A

Other = \$26,000 – LCMR funds

	Allocated	Spent	Obligated
Printing, mailings, distribution	\$3,000	\$ 24.50	\$0
Miscellaneous office supplies	\$3,000	\$ 159.51	\$0
Travel for personnel outside Minnesota (National training sessions, other out of state training, 2-3 sessions/year/employee)	\$10,000	\$0	\$0
Travel for personnel within Minnesota	\$10,000	\$ 937.58	\$0
TOTAL	\$26,000	\$ 1,121.59	\$0

Acquisition = \$4,000,000.00 - NRCS funds

NRCS through the WRP has committed to spending at least \$4 million dollars in the identified habitat corridors. The corridor the money is spent in will be dependent upon quantity and quality of the applications received from that corridor. The personnel hired through this agreement will promote and restore lands within their assigned corridor. The hiring of these employees will insure numerous high quality applications will be received and funded for the life of the habitat corridor project. Average acquisition and restoration costs vary from \$800/acre in the Aspen Parkland region to \$2800/ac in the Southern Lakes region. Total acres placed under WRP easement over the LCMR biennium will be approximately 4,000.

March 14, 2003 to May 1, 2003

All equipment purchased with LCMR funds, in the past and future, will be used for WRP activities by NRCS or its partners following the completion of this LCMR project. Title and license of this purchased equipment will be held by the NRCS.

May 2002 to March 13, 2003

We are requesting to transfer \$11,000 from Engineering Software to Engineering survey equipment & ATV's. NRCS will supply all of the required engineering software. We are also requesting to transfer \$5,000 from Computer, software, accessories to Engineering survey equipment & ATV's. We overestimated the cost of the computer systems and underestimated the costs of the engineering equipment and ATV's. The total cost of the equipment budget will remain at \$61,400.00. This budget amendment was approved on November 20, 2002.

July 2001 to May 2002

Due to the delay in hiring of the personnel, we are requesting to shift \$45,400 from personnel to equipment. The request to transfer \$45,000 was approved by LCMR on May 22, 2002.

NRCS, USFWS and MWA will provide training, guidance and administrative functions, office space and vehicles necessary for the employees to perform their duties. The estimated in-kind cost provided by the agencies and MWA will be up to \$175,000 for the biennium.

Any equipment purchased will be used for similar activities following completion of this project. We anticipate subsequent LCMR funding requests that will continue this effort, but will continue our support even without additional LCMR funds.

Completion Date:

Employees were recently hired and will report for work in June 2002 and will work through June 2004. NRCS and partners will provide ongoing training. The employees will begin work on existing applications or projects within the habitat corridor they are assigned. FY 2002 WRP money should become available sometime in June 2002. New projects will be funded at that time and the employees will focus their time on the processing of these new applications. Easements are typically recorded within 10 months of funding. These easements are perpetual. Restoration activities will begin in the spring of 2002 and continue through 2003 and beyond.

Result Status: NA

VI. PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SPENDING:

A. Past Spending:

Minnesota NRCS has spent over 48 million dollars restoring over 45,000 acres of lands through its various easement programs since 1993.

B. Current and Future Spending:

With the additional personnel hired under this project and through other NRCS agreements with Minnesota Waterfowl Association, US Fish and Wildlife Service and Ducks Unlimited, NRCS foresees at least 5 to 20 million

dollars sent to Minnesota for WRP funding annually over the next six years. NRCS through the WRP program has currently committed to spending at least 4 million over each LCMR biennium within the identified habitat corridors. Because of the placement of personnel hired for WRP implementation through this agreement. The majority of the WRP funding has been spent in LCMR corridors thereby exceeding NRCS's funding commitment to LCMR 3 fold.

As part of the new Federal Farm Bill, NRCS will work with Technical Service Providers (TSP) to accelerate implementation of programs like WRP. This can be accomplished through the use of contribution agreements which will require a 50% non-federal match. It is anticipated that LCMR funds could be used for a contribution agreement which effectively could double the LCMR contribution tied to the corridor project.

C. Project Partners:

The LCMR coordinators at the Minnesota NRCS state office are:

Tim Koehler, Assistant State Conservationist, 651-602-7857, email: tim.koehler@mn.usda.gov

Jean Sieben, Easement Specialist, 651-602-7873, email: jean.sieben@mn.usda.gov

March 14, 2003

The agreement between MWA, NRCS and the FWS that facilitated the original \$350,000 project budget was terminated March 14, 2003. DU and NRCS will work together to complete this project with DU administering the balance of the allocated budget.

July 24, 2001 to March 13, 2003

NRCS will be the recipient of the agreement with Minnesota Waterfowl Association and the Department of Natural Resources to administer the LCMR funds for the Wetlands Reserve Program. In addition, NRCS has entered into an agreement with MWA and the FWS to facilitate this LCMR workplan. MWA will hire and perform the administrative functions necessary to maintain the LCMR funded employees. The FWS and NRCS will provide housing, vehicles and equipment needed for the employees to perform their assigned duties. The NRCS and the FWS will provide training and technical support to the employees. The NRCS and MWA will provide administrative supervision and support to the employees. NRCS will set primary workload priorities for the employees. NRCS will approve all bills submitted to the DNR by MWA for reimbursement.

NRCS has two ongoing agreements outside of the LCMR project:

One agreement is with Ducks Unlimited (DU) in which two Wetland Restoration Technicians have been employed and are stationed in the Alexandria NRCS field office and the Albert Lea NRCS field office. A Civil Engineering Technician has also been hired to work on the Glacial Ridge project northwest Minnesota. DU also provides engineering services and program incentives to funded WRP projects.

The other agreement is with Minnesota Waterfowl Association (MWA) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in which two Wetland Restoration Technicians have also been employed. One is stationed at MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Bloomington and one is stationed in the FWS office in Litchfield. It is expected that this second position will be relocated to the Litchfield USFWS office in order to better facilitate work within the LCMR project areas in the prairie pothole region of Western Minnesota.

VII. DISSEMINATION:

News of the project and individual accomplishments will be disseminated by periodic news releases from partners included in the LCMR project, and our NRCS/SWCD field offices. Information about the corridor project and WRP progress will be incorporated into the NRCS WRP web page located at the following address:
<http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/ecs/wrp/>

VIII. LOCATIONS:

NRCS will acquire easements in project areas 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, and 10.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic workprogram progress reports will be submitted not later than May 31, 2002; November 30, 2002; and March 30, 2003, and November 30, 2003 or earlier if funds are expended before the completion date. A final workprogram report and associated products will be submitted by June 30, 2004 or by the completion date as set in the appropriation.

X. RESEARCH PROJECTS: N/A