

2001 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending September 30, 2004

FINAL REPORT

TITLE: Restoring Minnesota's Fish & Wildlife Habitat Corridors; Conservation Easement Programs; Native Prairie Bank, 3(g); Area 1 (Aspen Parklands); Area 3 (Prairie Border), Area 6 (Upper Minnesota River); Area 7 (Alexandria Moraine); Area 9 (Des Moines River Valley). Restoration and Management 2(k): Prairie Restoration

PROJECT MANAGER: Peter Buesseler

ORGANIZATION: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

ADDRESS: Division of Ecological Services, Scientific and Natural Areas Program
1509 1st Ave. N, Fergus Falls, MN 56537

WEB SITE ADDRESS: www.dnr.state.mn.us

FUND: Environmental Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: ML 2001, 1st Special Session, Ch. 2, Sec. 14, Subd. 04(e)

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$336,250

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Conservation Easement Programs — Native Prairie Bank 3(g): Acquisition of Native Prairie Bank easements and fee title was used to help establish larger grassland blocks supporting native grassland species. Through this project the MN DNR acquired 11 Native Prairie Bank easements totaling 362 acres, and The Nature Conservancy acquired 2 native prairie parcels totaling 1093 acres, in Corridor Areas 3, 6, 7, & 9. Native prairie is Minnesota's most endangered natural habitat type. Less than one percent of the state's original 18 million acres remains. These lands are home to more rare and endangered plants and animals than any other major habitat in Minnesota - over 100 listed plant and animal species. Most of the remaining native prairie is on private land. The Native Prairie Bank Program authorizes DNR to protect native prairie by entering into conservation easements with landowners. By state law, land that has never been plowed, with less than 10% tree cover, and with predominantly native prairie vegetation qualifies for the native prairie bank program. The purpose of these easements is to provide permanent protection for the prairie resource while the land remains in private ownership. Easements may allow selected agricultural practices such as mowing of wild hay or grazing. Development of prairie bank parcels consists of activities necessary to protect the state's investment in acquired easements, such as signing and posting. **Restoration and Management — Prairie Restoration 2(k):** Ten projects were completed totaling 420 acres of habitat improvement on private prairie lands in Corridors 3, 6, and 9. Projects included woody encroachment removal, mowing firebreaks, and prairie restoration. This was complemented by 1223 acres of additional habitat improvement funded by the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) for Prairie Species at Risk.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Information brochures on the Prairie Bank Easement Program are distributed through DNR, federal (FWS, NRCS, etc.) and other state offices (SWCD, etc). Special displays are put up at county fairs, at Prairie Day, and announcements through radio releases.

04e3g

Date of Report: November 29, 2004

LCMR Final Work Program report

Title: Restoring Minnesota's Fish & Wildlife Habitat Corridors; Conservation Easement Programs; Native Prairie Bank, 3(g); Area 1 (Aspen Parklands); Area 3 (Prairie Border), Area 6 (Upper Minnesota River); Area 7 (Alexandria Moraine); Area 9 (Des Moines River Valley). Restoration and Management 2(k): Prairie Restoration

Project Manager: Peter Buessler
Affiliation: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Mailing Address: Division of Ecological Services, Scientific and Natural Areas Program
1509 1st Ave. N, Fergus Falls, MN 56537
Telephone Number: (218) 739-7576 x240
E-Mail: peter.buesseler@dnr.state.mn.us
Fax: (218) 739-7601
Web Address: www.dnr.state.mn.us

Total Biennial Project Budget:

<u>Fund</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Approp</u>	<u>Liquid</u>	<u>Encumb</u>	<u>Balance</u>
Restoring MN Fish & Wildlife Habitat Corridors (ETF) 2001					
Native Prairie Bank 3(g)		\$300,000	\$300,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Prairie Restoration 2(k)		\$ 36,250	\$ 36,250	\$ 0	\$ 0
Grand Total		\$336,250	\$336,250	\$ 0	\$ 0

Legal Citation: 04(e) M.L. 2001, First Special Session, Chapter 2, Section 14, Subd. 04(e) \$11,745,000 (Env. Trust Fund). Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridors

\$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. The appropriation is available until June 30, 2004, at which time the project must be completed and final products delivered, unless an earlier date is specified in the work program.

Carryforward Language: The availability of the appropriation for the following project is extended to June 30, 2006: Laws 2001, First Special Session chapter 2, section 14, subdivision 4, paragraph (e), restoring Minnesota's fish and wildlife habitat corridors, and after June 30, 2004, the appropriation may be spent as provided in Laws 2003, chapter 128, article 1, section 9, subdivision 5, paragraph (a), restoring Minnesota's fish and wildlife habitat corridors-phase II.

II AND III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:

Conservation Easement Programs — Native Prairie Bank 3(g): Acquisition of Native Prairie Bank easements and fee title was used to help establish larger grassland blocks supporting native grassland species. Through this project the MN DNR acquired 11 Native Prairie Bank easements totaling 362 acres, and The Nature Conservancy acquired 2 native prairie parcels with additional funds totaling 1093 acres, in Corridor Areas 3, 6, 7, & 9. Native prairie is Minnesota's most endangered natural habitat type. Less than one percent of the state's original 18 million acres remains. These lands are home to more rare and endangered plants and animals than any other major habitat in Minnesota - over 100 listed plant and animal species. Most of the remaining native prairie is on private land. The Native Prairie Bank Program authorizes DNR to protect native prairie by entering into conservation easements with landowners. By state law, land that has never been plowed, with less than 10% tree cover, and with predominantly native prairie vegetation qualifies for the native prairie bank program. The purpose of these easements is to provide permanent protection for the prairie resource while the land remains in private ownership. Easements may allow selected agricultural practices such as mowing of wild hay or grazing. Development of prairie bank parcels consists of activities necessary to protect the state's investment in acquired easements, such as signing and posting.

Restoration and Management — Prairie Restoration 2(k): Ten projects were completed totaling 420 acres of habitat improvement on private prairie lands in Corridors 3, 6, and 9. Projects included woody encroachment removal, mowing firebreaks, and prairie restoration. This was complemented by 1223 acres of additional habitat improvement funded by the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) for Prairie Species at Risk.

IV. Outline of Project Results: The expenditures and accomplishments for Results 1 - 5 (easements) are summarized for the entire project (see summary table below), and by Corridor Area. Expenditures and accomplishments for Development (Result #6) and Professional Services (Result #7) are not easily separated by Corridor Area and are presented only for the project as a whole.

Summary: Results 1- 5 (easement acquisition)

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Encumbered</u>	<u>Balance</u>	<u>Acres enrolled</u>
LCMR	\$ 278,843	\$278,843	\$0	\$0	362
Other Funds (TNC)	\$300,000	\$359,000	-	\$(59,000)*	1,093
Totals	\$578,843	\$637,843	\$29,434	\$(59,000)	1,588

**The negative value indicates that TNC contributed more money (i.e. purchased more acres) than they originally committed to in the work program*

Progress by Corridor Area:

Result 1: Corridor #3 – Aspen Parkland Project Area

No easements were acquired in this landscape. Acquisition efforts were focused on other corridors

Result 2: #3 Border Prairie Project Area

County	Tract	Acres	Cost	
			LCMR	Other Funds (TNC)
Clay	Bluestem Prairie addition	853		\$230,000
Douglas	Lund 21	42	\$15,027	
Total		895	\$15,027	\$230,000

Lund 21 is a 42-acre prairie tract on either side of a creek flowing into nearby Lake Christina. Numerous opportunities exist in the area to acquire additional prairie easements.

TNC acquired an 835-acre addition to Bluestem Prairie SNA in January 2002. This site provides a connecting corridor between a state WMA and Bluestem Prairie. The 107 acres adjacent the WMA will be transferred to DNR. The rest will be retained by TNC as an addition to Bluestem Prairie.

Result 3: Corridor #6 – Upper Minnesota River

County	Tract	Acres	Cost	
			LCMR	Other Funds (TNC)
Big Stone	Otrej 26	20	\$7,191	
Lac Qui Parle	Addition to Plover Prairie	240		\$129,000
Traverse	Walls 7-2	27	\$18,722	
Big Stone	Big Stone 6	8	\$3,799	
Lac Qui Parle	Camp Release 32	42	\$29,434	
Total		337	\$59,146	\$129,000

Otrej 26: A 20-acre prairie tract between two USFWS Waterfowl Production Areas

Addition to Plover Prairie: This easement is in the Upper Minnesota River linear corridor and links a 139 acre tract with a 516 acre tract of the TNC Plover Prairie; which in turn connects to the Pyramid WMA, USFWS private lands easement, and Lac Qui Parle WMA.

Walls 7-2: This parcel is part of a string of prairies along the bluff line overlooking Lake Traverse. We are working to enroll several of these in easements to protect the corridor.

Camp Release 32: This is a 72-acre mesic and dry prairie adjacent the Minnesota River, surveyed and mapped by the MN County Biological Survey. Nearby protected lands include 1 native prairie bank easement, 1 WMA, and Lac Qui Parle State Park. 42 ac will be prorated to Phase I accomplishments, 30 acres to Phase II

Big Stone 6: A dry prairie parcel near Big Stone Lake, adjacent to an existing WMA. Other nearby protected lands include Big Stone Lake State Park, a Prairie Bank easement, and 3 Waterfowl Production Areas

Result 3: #7 Alexandria Moraine

County	Tract	Acres	Cost	
			LCMR	Other Funds (TNC)
Kandiyohi	Norway Lake 5	75	\$42,872	\$0
Total		75	\$42,872	\$0

Norway Lake 5: A high quality, 75-acre dry prairie site identified by the County Biological Survey in Kandiyohi County

Result 5: #9 Des Moines River Project Area

County	Tract	Acres	Cost	
			LCMR	Other Funds (TNC)
Jackson	Petersberg 26	95	\$98,331	
Jackson	Petersberg 33	5	\$ 5,500	
Jackson	Christiana 31-1	36	\$45,510	
Jackson	Christiana 31-2	12	\$12,457	
Total		148	\$161,798	\$0

Petersberg 26: A 95-acre prairie tract surrounding a tributary to the Des Moines River drainage

Petersberg 33: A 56-acre prairie on a tributary of the Des Moines River. The total cost of this easement is \$59,164. Funding was split between CH01 funds (\$5,500) and 2000 Prairie Bank bonding funds (\$53,664)

Christiana 31 (1 & 2): Two easements on adjacent properties were acquired in this section. There are 2 other Prairie Bank easements and the Holthe Prairie SNA within one mile.

Result 6: Development

<u>Budget</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Encumbered</u>	<u>Balance</u>
\$1,071	\$1,071	\$0	0

The monies are used to pay for signing and posting of the easement boundaries.

Result 7: Prairie Restoration

This involved woody encroachment removal on Prairie Bank easements and adjacent private prairie lands in Corridors 3, 6, and 9. This work complements additional projects being funded by the DNR Prairie Species at Risk – Landowner Incentives Program and a DNR/FWS Challenge Grant RxFire proposal in these Corridors. Work in Corridor 9 was carried out through the MCC crew based out of Windom. In Corridors 3 & 6 we used private sector contractors

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Encumbered</u>	<u>Balance</u>
LCMR	\$36,250	\$36,250	\$0	\$0
Other Funds (LIP/FWS)	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$0	\$0
Totals	\$76,250	\$76,250	\$0	\$0

Corridor Area #1: Hydro-axed brush on a 50 ac mesic prairie in Red Lake Co. Mowed fire breaks and carried out a prescribed fire.

Corridor Area # 3: Cut tree encroachment on a high quality wet prairie in the Felton Prairie area of northern Clay County (126 ac). The project spanned the Ulen WMA and a Prairie Bank easement. Site provides habitat for the federally threatened western prairie fringed orchid, prairie chickens, rare butterflies, and other listed prairie species. Completed a prairie reconstruction on 22 acres adjacent a Prairie Bank easement in southern Ottertail County.

Corridor Area # 6: Completed 3 woody encroachment removal projects (152 ac), one in Big Stone County, 2 in Traverse County.

Corridor Area # 9: Completed 4 woody encroachment removal projects (70 ac), 2 in Cottonwood County and 2 in Jackson County.

Result 8: Professional services

<u>Budget</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Encumbered</u>	<u>Balance</u>
\$20,086	\$ 20,086	\$0	\$0

The monies are used to pay for appraisals, boundary surveys, title search and other legal paper work done to secure prairie bank easements.

V. TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET: (see attachment A and page 1)**Native Prairie Bank (3g)**

All Results:	Personnel:	NA
All Results:	Equipment:	NA
All Results:	Development:	\$1,071
All Results:	Acquisition:	\$278,843
All Results:	Other:	\$20,086 (professional services)
TOTAL BUDGET:		\$300,000

Prairie Restoration (2k)

All Results:	Personnel:	NA
All Results:	Equipment:	NA
All Results:	Development:	NA
All Results:	Acquisition:	NA
All Results:	Other:	\$36,250 (contracts)
TOTAL BUDGET:		\$36,250

VI. PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SPENDING

A. Past Spending:

Funding for Prairie Bank acquisition since 1987 and development has been as follows:

<u>Bonding</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Approp</u>	<u>Liquid</u>	<u>Encumb</u>	<u>Balance</u>
Prairie Bank	1987	\$300,000	\$300,000		\$0
Prairie Bank	1990	\$100,000	\$100,000		\$0
Prairie Bank	1994	\$300,000	\$300,000		\$0
Prairie Bank improvement	1994	\$70,000	\$70,000		\$0
Prairie Bank	1998	\$400,000	\$400,000		\$0
Prairie Bank	2000	\$1,000,000	\$992,996	\$7,004	\$0
<u>Trust Fund</u>	1993	\$100,000	\$100,000		\$0
TOTAL		\$2,270,000	\$2,262,996	\$7,004	\$0

B. Current and Future Spending:

The long-range goal of the Native Prairie Bank Easement Program is to protect 75,000 acres of native prairie on private lands. The 2003 legislature approved \$1,000,000 in new bonding funds for Native Prairie Bank easements.

C. Project Partners:

The Nature Conservancy and DNR are working with other agencies and private organizations to protect prairie remnants in priority landscape areas.

D. Time:

Project was completed by September 30, 2004 to allow for sufficient time to complete acquisition of parcels.

VII. DISSEMINATION

Information brochures on the Prairie Bank Easement Program are distributed through DNR, federal (FWS, NRCS, etc.) and other state offices (SWCD, etc). Special displays are put up at county fairs, at Prairie Day, and announcements through radio releases.

VIII. LOCATION

Easements and restoration projects are targeted to high priority prairie parcels in identified corridor areas

IX. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Progress reports for this work program will be submitted to LCMR on May 31, 2002; November 30, 2002; March 30, 2003, November 30, 2003, March 30, 2003, and November 30, 2003. The final work program report will be submitted by September 30, 2004, or by the completion date as set in the appropriation.

Attachment A: Budget Detail for 2001 Projects - Summary and a Budget page for each partner

Proposal Title: Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Corridors Phase I (3g) - Prairie Bank Easements and (2k) Prairie Restoration

Project Manager Name: Peter Buesseler

LCMR Requested Dollars: \$336,250

Date: Final Report, November 29, 2004

2003 LCMR Proposal Budget	Results 1- 5 Budget:	Amount Spent	Balance	Result 6 Budget	Amount Spent	Balance	Result 7 Budget	Amount Spent	Balance	Result 8 Budget	Amount Spent	Balance	TOTAL Budget for Item	TOTAL Amount Spent for Item	TOTAL Balance for Item
	Easement acquisition			Development			Prairie Restoration			Professional Services					
BUDGET ITEM															
PERSONNEL: Staff Expenses, wages, salaries															
PERSONNEL:															
Contracts															
Professional/technical															
Other contracts (restoration work)							\$36,250	\$36,250	\$0				\$36,250	\$36,250	\$0
Space rental: NOT ALLOWED	X			X			X			X					
Other direct operating costs															
Equipment / Tools															
Office equipment & computers															
Other Capital equipment															
Land acquisition															
Land rights acquisition (easement)	\$278,843	\$278,843	\$0										\$278,843	\$278,843	\$0
Printing															
Advertising															
Communications, telephone, mail, etc.															
Office Supplies															
Other Supplies															
Travel expenses in Minnesota															
Travel outside Minnesota															
Construction															
Other land improvement: signing, posting, access improvement, etc.				\$1,071	\$1,071	\$0							\$1,071	\$1,071	\$0
Other: professional services for real estate transactions										\$20,086	\$20,086	\$0	\$20,086	\$20,086	\$0
COLUMN TOTAL	\$278,843	\$278,843	\$0	\$1,071	\$1,071	\$0	\$36,250	\$36,250	\$0	\$20,086	\$20,086	\$0	\$336,250	\$336,250	\$0

**Attachment B -- Habitat Corridors Partnership PHASE I -- Individual Work Program Summary
Final Report (November 2004)**

Date: November 29, 2004 (revised 2/24/05)

Activity: Native Prairie Bank 3(g), Prairie Restoration 2(k)	Partner	LCMR Allocation	LCMR Expenditure	LCMR Balance	Proposed Accomplishments			Current LCMR Accomplishments			Other Funds Committed	Other Funds Expenditure	Other Funds Balance**	Other Funds Acres	Other Funds Miles/ Shoreline	Other Funds Lakes Restored
					LCMR Acres	LCMR Miles/ Shoreline	LCMR Lakes Restored	LCMR Acres	LCMR Miles/ Shoreline	LCMR Lakes Restored						
Results 1-5: Easements	MN DNR	\$278,843	\$278,843	\$0	400			362			\$300,000	\$382,245	(\$82,245)	1,093		
Result 6: Development (sign & post)	MN DNR	\$1,071	\$1,071	\$0												
Result 7: Prairie Restoration	MN DNR	\$36,250	\$36,250	\$0	250			420			\$40,000	\$40,000	\$0	1159		
Result 8: Professional services	MN DNR	\$20,086	\$20,086	\$0												

** The negative value indicates that TNC has contributed more money (i.e. purchased more acres) than they originally committed to in the work program

