



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Enhanced Public Land Grasslands - Phase II

Laws of Minnesota 2015 Final Report

General Information

Date: 08/15/2025

Project Title: Enhanced Public Land Grasslands - Phase II

Funds Recommended: \$1,120,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2015, First Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(l)

Appropriation Language: \$1,120,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever to enhance and restore habitat on public lands. A list of proposed land restorations and enhancements must be provided as part of the final report.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Eran Sandquist

Title: MN Regional Representative

Organization: Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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Location Information

County Location(s): Jackson, Martin, Traverse, McLeod, Meeker, Grant, Cottonwood, Murray, Anoka, Renville, Redwood, Kandiyohi, Sibley, Washington, Otter Tail, Clay, Brown, Stevens, Faribault, Carver, Lincoln, Douglas, Stearns, Lyon, Watonwan, Nobles, Rock and Freeborn.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Prairie

Metro / Urban

Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity types:

Restore

Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Prairie

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

This project utilized a combination of wetland restoration, invasive tree removal, prairie seeding, and prescribed fire to improve habitat quality, diversity, and productivity on 8,227.9 acres of Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) and Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA's) within the prairie and metro regions of Minnesota.

Process & Methods

Working with area managers at both MN DNR and USFWS, Pheasants Forever requested proposals to complete wetland restoration, invasive tree removal, prairie seeding, and prescribed fire on existing WMA's and WPA's in the Prairie zone. Projects were then ranked based on priorities including, T&E species, Conservation Plan Focus Areas (e.g. the MN Prairie Plan), size of the complex area, water quality benefits, and overall cost to complete. Once projects were selected for funding, Pheasants Forever restoration staff worked closely with area managers in order to develop restoration/enhancement plans. Once those plans were developed they were written into a statement of work that was sent to numerous contractors in order to solicit competitive bids following PF's procurement policy. Once a contractor has been awarded the contract, PF and agency staff monitored the restoration/enhancement work to ensure it was completed adequately.

Pheasants Forever had proposed to enhance 7,800 acres of uplands and restore 45 acres of wetlands. We did fall short of our upland goal by enhancing 7,275 acres, as we gave priority to wetland restoration projects. This, however, caused us to far exceed our goal and restore 952 wetland acres, thus over-achieving our total acre goal by 382 acres. Additionally, due to the value of these wetland restoration projects, PF was able to bring more than \$156,000 of federal match, specifically from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, to this proposal. There were no significant issues that occurred during the proposal period. As with any work of this kind we anticipated there would be challenges due to weather, contractor difficulties, agency staff changes, etc. but by working closely with our partners we were able to be very successful on our delivery of this important wildlife habitat work.

How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?

In our request for proposals from agency partners, we put a high priority on projects on properties with T&E species. Therefore, any projects submitted that directly benefitted T&E species were more likely to be funded. Of course, with any project involving T&E species, we were careful to do restoration and enhancement practices thoughtfully with oversight by MN DNR and USFWS to ensure that no negative effects were created.

How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

This program specifically prioritized project sites in complex areas, as well as sites within the MN Prairie Conservation plan. By making this a focus of the program, our efforts directly went toward the reduction of habitat fragmentation and the expansion of habitat corridors.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

In this program, Pheasants Forever works closely with the MN DNR as well as USFWS to do work on WMA's and WPA's. Additionally many of the completed projects were brought to the attention of DNR and USFWS by hunters, as well as other non-profit conservation groups. We also partnered with the North American Wetlands Conservation Act in order to provide additional funds in order to complete numerous large wetland restorations. There was no significant opposition to this restoration and enhancement work.

Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

Opportunity to restore and enhance more than 8,000 acres of wildlife habitat is unique in itself. While working through multiple phases of this program, we start to witness true landscape level changes with regards to prairie grassland and wetland habitats. As with any program, there are always minor challenges and failures, ranging from weather delays and contractors not showing up, to wetland restorations being infeasible due to neighbor disputes, but by being diligent and working closely with our partners we have been able to overcome these obstacles and make significant improvements.

What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this program?

N/A

What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

Most of the work completed in this program takes lands that are of lower quality habitat for wildlife and improves them. One example of this is removing invasive trees from grassland habitat. This work will generally allow the unit to be managed more effectively by allowing the manager to focus on grassland management instead of invasive species management. While it's difficult for a third party like Pheasants Forever to provide an analysis of future costs on existing public land, work done under this proposal will facilitate future management activities.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
5-10 years after project completion	MN DNR, PF, Federal	Identify management needs	Identify Funding	Complete Management

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$89,200	\$89,200	\$43,800	-	-	-	\$89,200	\$43,800
Contracts	\$1,013,000	\$1,013,000	\$1,004,800	-	\$156,000	Federal	\$1,013,000	\$1,160,800
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$17,800	\$17,800	\$8,600	-	-	-	\$17,800	\$8,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,120,000	\$1,120,000	\$1,057,200	-	\$156,000	-	\$1,120,000	\$1,213,200

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MN State Coordinator	0.05	3.0	\$5,100	-	-	\$5,100
PF Regional Staff	0.2	3.0	\$23,200	-	-	\$23,200
PF Grants Staff	0.1	3.0	\$15,500	-	-	\$15,500

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

Shared support services cost 20.22% of the total payroll. Every hour an employee spends working directly on the grant, we recover 20% of the cost toward the overall shared support services pool.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Pheasants Forever was able to bring an additional \$156,020 in Federal Match to this proposal. This allowed us to complete a number of large wetland restorations.

Total Revenue: \$0

Revenue Spent: \$0

Revenue Balance: \$0

Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	45	698	0	0	0	0	0	0	45	698
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	7,800	7,529	0	0	0	0	7,800	7,529
Total	45	698	7,800	7,529	0	0	0	0	7,845	8,227

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	\$112,000	\$122,400	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$112,000	\$122,400
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	\$1,008,000	\$934,800	-	-	-	-	\$1,008,000	\$934,800
Total	\$112,000	\$122,400	\$1,008,000	\$934,800	-	-	-	-	\$1,120,000	\$1,057,200

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	634	0	0	0	0	45	318	0	0	45	952
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	150	21	0	0	0	0	7,650	7,254	0	0	7,800	7,275
Total	150	655	0	0	0	0	7,695	7,572	0	0	7,845	8,227

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/ Urban (AP)	Metro/ Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	\$75,000	\$81,500	-	-	-	-	\$112,000	\$40,900	-	-	\$187,000	\$122,400
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easemen t	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	\$2,700	-	-	-	-	\$933,000	\$932,100	-	-	\$933,000	\$934,800
Total	\$75,000	\$84,200	-	-	-	-	\$1,045,000	\$973,000	-	-	\$1,120,000	\$1,057,200

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

We did fall short of our upland goal by enhancing only 7,275 acres, as we gave priority to wetland restoration projects, causing us to far exceed our goal and restore 952 wetland acres, thus over achieving our total acre goal by 382 acres.

Outcomes

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

Other ~ *This program benefits the metropolitan urbanizing region of MN by restoring and enhancing habitats that are open to public access.*

Programs in prairie region:

Improved condition of habitat on public lands ~ *This program directly addressed the prairie region outcome to improve by condition of habitat on public lands as all practices did exactly that.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

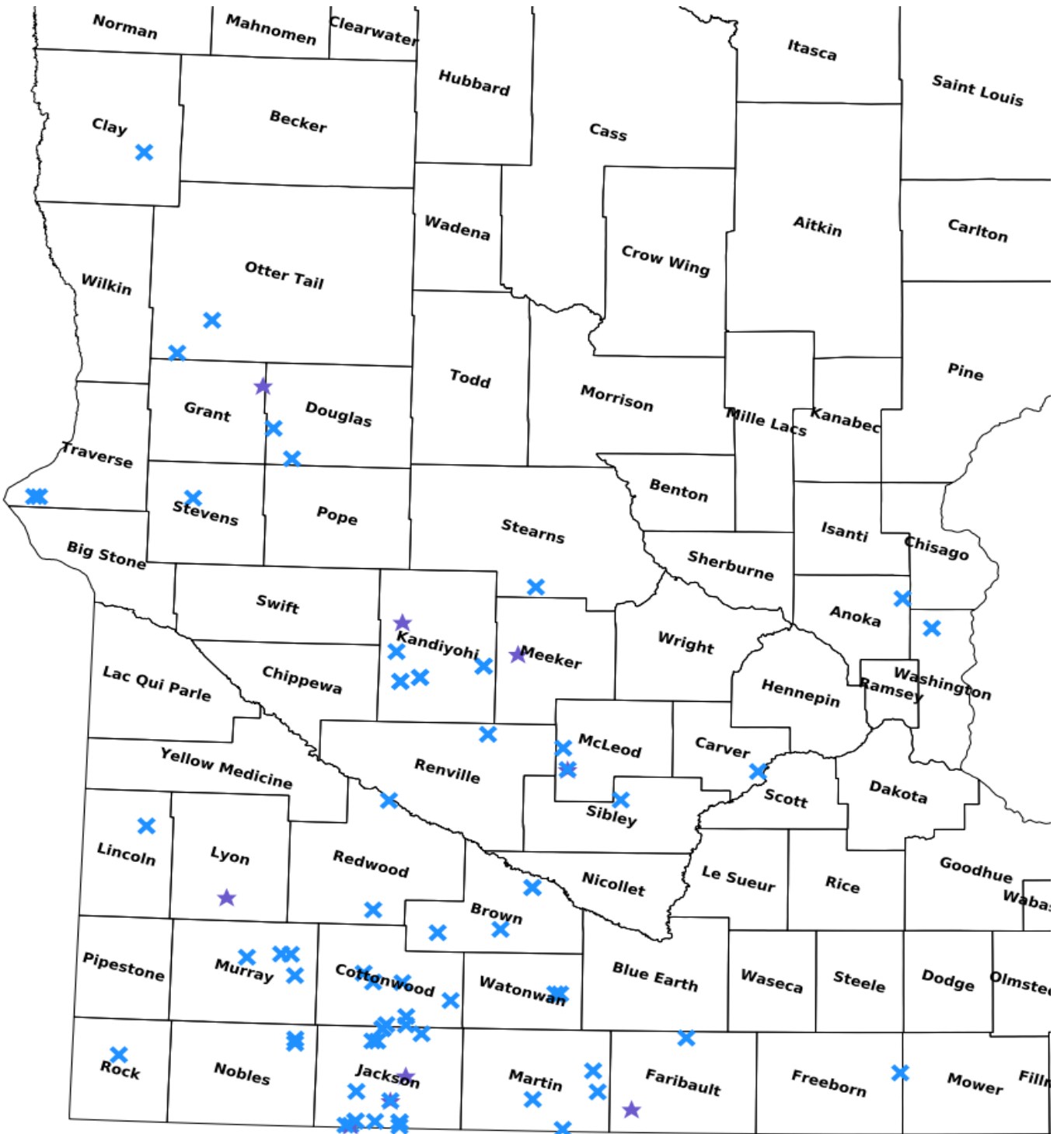
[Yes - Sign up criteria is attached](#)

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Carlos Avery WMA	Anoka	03322223	634	\$57,654	Yes	Wetland Enhancement
Groebsner WMA	Brown	10832205	46	\$8,000	Yes	Tree removal
Lambrecht WMA	Brown	11031217	86	\$14,400	Yes	Tree removal
Lambrecht WMA	Brown	11031217	13	\$4,800	Yes	Diversity Seeding
Reiks Slough	Brown	10834207	40	\$8,000	Yes	Tree removal
Carver Highlands WMA	Carver	11524225	75	\$54,320	Yes	Diversity Seeding
Hawley WMA	Clay	13945235	16	\$7,900	Yes	Tree removal
Blixseth WPA	Cottonwood	10536233	62	\$33,558	Yes	Diversity Seeding
Cottonwood Lake WPA	Cottonwood	10535219	116	\$17,400	Yes	2016 Prescribed Fire
Lake Augusta WPA	Cottonwood	10637212	224	\$33,600	Yes	2018 Prescribed Fire
Mountain Lake WPA	Cottonwood	10634234	27	\$4,050	Yes	2017 Prescribed Fire
Storden WPA	Cottonwood	10737234	259	\$38,850	Yes	2018 Prescribed Fire
Swan Lake WPA	Cottonwood	10636212	87	\$13,050	Yes	2016 Invasive Woody Removal
Wolf Lake WPA	Cottonwood	10535231	240	\$36,000	Yes	2017 Prescribed Fire
Red Rock WMA	Douglas	12840220	80	\$18,000	Yes	Tree removal
Sabolik WPA	Douglas	12740225	13	\$28,000	Yes	Tree removal
Maple River WPA	Faribault	10426210	9	\$1,350	Yes	2018 Invasive Woody Removal
Pilot Grove WPA	Faribault	10128202	178	\$11,812	Yes	Wetland Restoration
Turtle Creek WPA	Freeborn	10319224	140	\$21,000	Yes	2016 Prescribed Fire
Bah Lake WPA	Grant	13041236	7	\$6,425	Yes	Wetland Restoration
Boot Lake WPA	Jackson	10335231	42	\$21,322	Yes	Wetland Restoration
Christiania WPA	Jackson	10435210	92	\$13,800	Yes	2017 Prescribed Fire
Holy Trinity WPA	Jackson	10236234	189	\$28,350	Yes	2017 Prescribed Fire
Holy Trinity WPA	Jackson	10236234	32	\$54,018	Yes	Wetland Restoration
Jerry Schotzko WPA	Jackson	10136225	175	\$26,250	Yes	2017 Prescribed Fire
Little Sioux WPA	Jackson	10136230	9	\$8,766	Yes	Wetland Enhancement
Loon Lake WPA	Jackson	10136225	33	\$4,950	Yes	2016 Invasive Woody Removal
Minnesota WPA	Jackson	10137232	10	\$10,700	Yes	Tree removal
Minnesota WPA	Jackson	10137231	191	\$28,650	Yes	2017 Prescribed Fire
Minnesota WPA	Jackson	10137232	35	\$14,600	Yes	Wetland Restoration
Rush Lake WPA	Jackson	10137228	45	\$6,750	Yes	2017 Prescribed Fire
Skunk Creek WPA	Jackson	10137228	241	\$36,105	Yes	2016 Prescribed Fire
Spirit Lake WPA	Jackson	10136236	139	\$20,850	Yes	2017 Prescribed Fire
String Lake WPA	Jackson	10436205	231	\$16,750	Yes	Tree removal

String Lakes WPA	Jackson	10436205	6	\$900	Yes	2018 Invasive Woody Removal
Timber Lake WPA	Jackson	10436219	431	\$64,650	Yes	2016 Prescribed Fire
Timber Lake WPA	Jackson	10437224	80	\$11,625	Yes	Tree removal
Ulbricht WPA	Jackson	10237221	3	\$450	Yes	2017 Invasive Woody Removal
Ella Lake WPA	Kandiyohi	11933227	200	\$10,000	Yes	Tree removal
Ella Lake WPA	Kandiyohi	11933227	82	\$5,000	Yes	Tree removal
Hanson WPA	Kandiyohi	11836214	116	\$4,000	Yes	Tree removal
Hanson WPA	Kandiyohi	11836214	116	\$2,650	Yes	Tree removal
Quinn WPA	Kandiyohi	11936210	232	\$30,600	Yes	Tree removal
Schueler WPA	Kandiyohi	11835209	46	\$3,850	Yes	Tree removal
Schueler WPA	Kandiyohi	11835209	46	\$2,000	Yes	Tree removal
Swan Lake WPA	Kandiyohi	12036202	9	\$19,690	Yes	Wetland Restoration
Poposki WMA	Lincoln	11244218	160	\$83,323	Yes	Diversity Seeding/Tree removal
Sodus WMA	Lyon	10942201	2	\$8,632	Yes	Wetland Restoration
Center Creek WMA	Martin	10329221	25	\$30,015	Yes	Tree removal
Leudtke WMA	Martin	10229215	106	\$30,000	Yes	Tree removal
Lewisville WMA	Martin	10630220	17	\$5,836	Yes	Tree removal
Minowa WMA	Martin	10130233	80	\$10,838	Yes	Tree removal
Pierce Lake WPA	Martin	10231228	116	\$17,400	Yes	2016 Prescribed Fire
Eagle Lake WPA	McLeod	11630232	79	\$6,975	Yes	Tree removal
Pebbles WMA	McLeod	11530228	2	\$24,500	Yes	Wetland Restoration
Pebbles WMA	McLeod	11530228	34	\$24,357	Yes	Tree removal
Acton WPA	Meeker	11932211	2	\$15,700	Yes	Wetland Restoration
5-Mile Corner WPA	Murray	10741215	169	\$25,350	Yes	2017 Prescribed Fire
Buffalo Lake WPA	Murray	10739207	1	\$1,650	Yes	Tree removal
Devils Run WPA	Murray	10639205	154	\$23,100	Yes	2016 Prescribed Fire
Slaughter Slough WPA	Murray	10740211	281	\$15,225	Yes	Tree removal
Graham Lake WPA	Nobles	10439220	143	\$21,450	Yes	2018 Prescribed Fire
Jack Creek WPA	Nobles	10439229	9	\$1,350	Yes	2016 Prescribed Fire
Dahler Slough WPA	Otter Tail	13144225	7	\$18,081	Yes	Tree removal
Haugen WPA	Otter Tail	13242218	214	\$37,903	Yes	Tree removal
Cedar Rock WMA	Redwood	11336204	97	\$19,000	Yes	Tree removal
Lamberton WMA	Redwood	10937213	57	\$28,414	Yes	Diversity Seeding
Cream City WPA	Renville	11633214	320	\$6,000	Yes	Tree removal
Touch the Sky Prairie NWR	Rock	10345217	150	\$22,500	Yes	2018 Prescribed Fire
Hahn Lake WPA	Sibley	11428232	59	\$9,900	Yes	Tree removal
Rice Lake WPA	Stearns	12231220	30	\$20,000	Yes	Diversity Seeding
Pepperton WPA	Stevens	12543215	79	\$23,000	Yes	Tree removal
Mosquito Ranch WPA	Traverse	12548220	67	\$23,360	Yes	Tree removal
Robinhood WPA	Traverse	12548221	432	\$82,000	Yes	Tree removal/Diversity Seeding
Hardwood Creek WMA	Washington	03221226	21	\$10,000	Yes	Prescribed Fire/Tree removal
WR Taylor WMA	Watonwan	10630219	131	\$13,756	Yes	Tree removal

Parcel Map



0 11 22 33 mi

- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ✚ Other