

# Request for Funding

## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Fiscal Year 2015 / ML 2014

**Program or Project Title:** Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Land Acquisition , Phase 5

**Funds Requested:** \$2,451,200

**Manager's Name:** Richard Johnson

**Title:**

**Organization:** The Nature Conservancy

**Street Address:** 1101 W. River Parkway

**City:** Minneapolis, 55415-1291

**Telephone:** 612-331-0790

**E-Mail:** rich\_johnson@tnc.org

**Organization Web Site:**

**County Locations:** Becker, Beltrami, Big Stone, Blue Earth, Brown, Chippewa, Clay, Clearwater, Cottonwood, Douglas, Fairbault, Freeborn, Grant, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Kittson, Lac qui Parle, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Lyon, Mahnomen, Marshall, Martin, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Norman, Otter Tail, Pennington, Pipestone, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Roseau, Sibley, Stearns, Steele, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, Waseca, Watonwan, Wilkin, and Yellow Medicine.

### **Ecological Planning Regions:**

- Prairie

### **Activity Type:**

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee

### **Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:**

- Prairie

## **Abstract:**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will permanently protect native prairie and associated wetland complexes in western Minnesota by purchasing fee title properties and/or habitat easements.

## **Design and Scope of Work:**

Only a small portion of the original tallgrass prairie remains. Native prairie has declined by 98.7% in Minnesota. Only 235,000 acres of the original tallgrass prairie in the state remain. Of these, roughly 100,000 acres lack any form of legal protection. In addition, grassland dependent bird species have shown steeper, more consistent, and geographically more widespread declines than any other group of North American birds.

The Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge was established to preserve, restore, and manage a portion of the remaining critical northern tallgrass prairie habitat and associated habitats at widespread locations throughout the western Minnesota and northwestern Iowa historic range. The number of acres purchased, however, has been limited due to funding shortfalls since the establishment of this refuge. The current land acquisition budget cannot keep up with the landowner interest in this program. This funding will provide TNC the opportunity to aid the USFWS to better meet refuge goals and objectives to protect this vanishing habitat.

TNC will work closely with the USFWS to purchase approximately 725 acres of native prairie in western Minnesota. Approximately 485 acres will be fee title acquisitions and 240 acres will be protected by permanent habitat easements. Conservancy and Service staff will review potential properties within the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area and work together to protect these tracts.

Fee title tracts will be the top priority for the funding. Funding may also be used for the purchase of habitat easements depending on landowner intent. While easement costs vary by parcel, easements purchased as part of this program generally cost 65-75% of the unrestricted fair market value.

The majority of the lands protected will consist of native prairie. Because of the nature of parcel ownership, however, some of this acreage will likely include smaller areas of converted lands needing grassland or wetland restoration. Restoration of these lands will be completed where needed.

Lands and easements purchased through this program by TNC will be transferred to the USFWS and will become units of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge to be owned and managed by the USFWS.

## Planning

### **MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:**

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

### **Plans Addressed:**

- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Northern Tallgrass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area (HPA) Final Environmental Impact Statement
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Strategic Habitat Conservation Model
- The Nature Conservancy's Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecoregional Plan

### **LSOHC Statewide Priorities:**

- Address Minnesota landscapes that have historical value to fish and wildlife, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, Minnesota County Biological Survey data, and rare, threatened and endangered species inventories in land and water decisions, as well as long-term or permanent solutions to aquatic invasive species
- Are ongoing, successful, transparent and accountable programs addressing actions and targets of one or more of the ecological sections
- Ensures activities for "protecting, restoring and enhancing" are coordinated among agencies, non profits and others while doing this important work; provides the most cost-effective use of financial resources; and where possible takes into consideration the value of local outreach, education, and community engagement to sustain project outcomes
- Leverage effort and/or other funds to supplement any OHF appropriation
- Produce multiple enduring conservation benefits
- Provide Minnesotans with greater public access to outdoor environments with hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation opportunities
- Use a science-based strategic planning and evaluation model to guide protection, restoration and enhancement, similar to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model

### **LSOHC Prairie Section Priorities:**

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes
- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna
- Protect expiring CRP lands
- Protect, enhance, and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

## Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- No Relationships Listed

## Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

This project will greatly accelerate conservation activities in prairie regions of Minnesota. Since 2000, the USFWS has received \$6,320,000 in federal Land and Water Conservation Funds. Appropriations have averaged approximately \$500,000 annually with no funding available in some years. This level of funding has allowed them to purchase fee title and easement interests in smaller sized tracts of prairie during the last 12 years. The addition of Outdoor Heritage Funds will greatly increase TNC's and the USFWS's ability to protect larger tracts of native prairie throughout the 49 Minnesota counties in the Refuge.

Significant in-kind time will be spent by US Fish and Wildlife Service Real Estate, Refuge, and Field staff on this project. This appears in the Budget attachment as In-kind/Volunteer Contributions.

Outdoor Heritage Funds will be additive to TNC's budget.

## Sustainability and Maintenance:

Outdoor Heritage Funds will be used to purchase the land in fee title or to purchase perpetual habitat easements. The land purchased will be transferred to the USFWS to become units of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR. Long term costs for restoration, management, and wildlife and habitat monitoring will be funded through annual USFWS operations funding. Habitat easements are perpetual and managers will work with landowners to maintain and, where needed, restore the native prairie on each tract of land.

## Government Approval:

*Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition?* - **No**

Local government approval will not be sought on each individual tract of land. Local MN DNR and USDA offices will be contacted regarding potential fee title/easement purchases to determine if any ongoing programs will affect acquisitions. Acquisition goals have also gone through a public review process which occurred during the development of the final Environmental Impact Statement by the USFWS as required by the National Environmental Policy Act during refuge establishment.

## Permanent Protection:

*Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection?* - **Yes**

## Hunting and Fishing Plan:

*Is this land open for hunting and fishing?* - **Yes**

The fee title properties will be open to hunting and other public uses including wildlife observation, interpretation, photography, and environmental education per Minnesota Statutes 2012, Section 97A.056, Subdivision 19(b). The properties where habitat easements are purchased will stay in private ownership and therefore will not be open for public use unless that landowner authorizes those uses.

## Public Use:

Will the eased land be open for public use? - **No**

## Permanent Protection:

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection? - **Yes**

## Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Identify priority acquisitions (fee and easement)	July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2017
Appraisals ordered	July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2017
Purchase agreements finalized	July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2017
Acquisitions complete	June 30, 2017
Grassland Restoration/Enhancement	June 30, 2017

## Outcomes

### Programs in prairie region:

- Expiring CRP lands are permanently protected - *Acres of former CRP lands protected by fee acquisition or permanent easement will be calculated.*
- Agriculture lands are converted to grasslands to sustain functioning prairie systems - *Acres of restored grassland will be calculated.*
- Remnant native prairies are part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and large and small wetlands - *Area of larger protected complexes adjoining newly protected lands will be calculated.*
- Remnant native prairies and wetlands are perpetually protected and adequately buffered - *Acres of native and restored grassland protected by fee acquisition or permanent easement will be calculated.*

## Budget Spreadsheet

**Total Amount of Request: \$2,451,200**

### Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$97,500	\$67,600		\$165,100
Contracts	\$250,000	\$0		\$250,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,455,000	\$0		\$1,455,000
Easement Acquisition	\$480,000	\$0		\$480,000
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
Professional Services	\$85,000	\$0		\$85,000
Direct Support Services	\$78,700	\$0		\$78,700
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$2,451,200	\$67,600	-	\$2,518,800

### Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Negotiators	0.83	0.83	\$71,000	\$0		\$71,000
Data Manager/Technician	0.32	0.32	\$13,500	\$0		\$13,500
Field Steward/Land Steward	0.14	0.14	\$8,000	\$0		\$8,000
Grants Administration	0.11	0.11	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
USFWS Personnel & In-Kind Contributions	0.00	0.00	\$0	\$67,600	USFWS	\$67,600
Total	1.40	1.40	\$97,500	\$67,600	-	\$165,100

## Output Tables

**Table 1. Acres by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	485	0	0	485
Protect in Easement	0	240	0	0	240
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	725	0	0	725

**Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$1,838,400	\$0	\$0	\$1,838,400
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$612,800	\$0	\$0	\$612,800
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$2,451,200	\$0	\$0	\$2,451,200

**Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	485	0	485
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	240	0	240
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	725	0	725

**Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,838,400	\$0	\$1,838,400
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$612,800	\$0	\$612,800
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,451,200	\$0	\$2,451,200

**Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles**

0 miles

# Parcel List

## Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

## Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Becker

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Beltrami

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Big Stone

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Blue Earth

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Brown

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Chippewa

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Clay

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Clearwater

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Cottonwood

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full



## Douglas

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

## Fairbault

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

## Freeborn

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

## Grant

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

## Jackson

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

## Kandiyohi

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

## Kittson

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

## Lac qui Parle

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

## Le Sueur

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

## Lincoln

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

## Lyon

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Mahnomen

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Marshall

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Martin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

McLeod

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Meeker

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Murray

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Nicollet

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Nobles

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Norman

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Otter Tail

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Pennington

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Pipestone

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Polk

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Pope

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Red Lake

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Redwood

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Renville

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Rock

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Roseau

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Sibley

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Stearns

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Steele

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Stevens

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Swift

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Traverse

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Waseca

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Watonwan

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Wilkin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

Yellow Medicine

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel TBD	2	0	\$0	No	Full	Full

### Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

### Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.