

Memo

Date: 12/31/2020

To: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Staff and Members

From: Greg Hoch, Prairie Habitat Supervisor

RE: Extension Request, ML16 DNR Grassland – Phase 8

Summary of Request

Current Appropriation Language: ML 2016, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(j)

\$3,983,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources to accelerate restoration and enhancement of prairies, grasslands, and savannas on wildlife management areas, scientific and natural areas, native prairie bank land, and bluff prairies on state forest land in southeastern Minnesota. A list of proposed land restorations and enhancements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Reason for Request

- We are requesting an extension due to past project delays that we have been unable to recoup due to unforeseen Covid delays.
- Recent more dramatic winter weather (either mild or very snowy), especially in southern Minnesota, means the ground hasn't frozen as deeply as usual. This has delayed some projects because contractors could not get heavy equipment to the sites without significant damage to the soil. Our hope was to use last winter and this winter to 'catch-up' on these projects. However, Covid has led to delays planning and implementing contracting work. Bids just advertised will now not have adequate flexibility in case of inclement spring weather.
- Likewise, we will also need to rely on good spring weather to get seed purchased this winter/spring for restoration into the ground.
- With good weather and efficient procurement this spring, we are confident in spending remaining contracting and restoration funds. However, an extension would allow flexibility in case of additional weather and pandemic related challenges, to achieve the best project outcomes.

Requested Change

- The Grant Manager and Contract Specialists for this appropriation request a one year extension on this appropriation in the event of inclement weather for the rest of the winter or issues with contractor availability. If all goes well, we should spend these funds and finish the appropriation by the current deadline. However, an extension would give our staff and contractors additional options if needed.