

FINAL REPORT**2003 Project Abstract**

For the Period Ending June 30, 2006

TITLE: Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridors Phase II. Conservation Easement Programs; Native Prairie Bank 3g, (1) Aspen Parklands, (3) Border Prairie, (6) Upper Minnesota River, (7) Alexandria Moraine, (9) Des Moines River Valley, (10) Southern Lakes, and (11) Mississippi Bluff Lands.

PROJECT MANAGER: Peter Buesseler

ORGANIZATION: DNR Ecological Services, Scientific and Natural Areas Program

ADDRESS: 1509 1st Ave N, Fergus Falls, MN 56537

WEB SITE ADDRESS: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us>

FUND: Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: ML 2003, Ch. 128, Art. 1, Sec. 9, Subd. 5a

Total Biennial LCMR Project Budget	LCMR Appropriation:	\$ 191,600
	Minus Amount Spent:	\$ 191,600
	Equals Balance:	\$ 0

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Four Native Prairie Bank perpetual easements (223 acres) were acquired by the DNR with ETF funding, and one fee-title acquisition (904 ac) was completed with TNC funds for this project.

Corridor #3 — Border Prairie Project Area

Lund 2 Prairie Bank - Douglas County (68 acres)

Corridor #6 — Upper Minnesota River Project Area

Hantho 17 Prairie Bank - Lac Qui Parle County (40 acres)

Camp Release 32 - Lac Qui Parle County (42 ac prorated to Phase I, 30 ac. to Phase II)

Corridor #7 — Alexandria Moraine Area

Ordway Prairie - Langsjoen/Hogan (TNC) - Kandiyohi County (904 acres)

Corridor #9 — Des Moines River Valley Project Area

Great Bend 29 - Cottonwood County (85 acres)

Native prairie is Minnesota's most endangered natural habitat type. We once had over 18 million acres of prairie; today less than one percent remains – mostly on private land. These lands are home to more rare and endangered plants and animals than any other natural habitat - over 100 different listed species. Native Prairie Bank easements provide permanent protection for the prairie resource while keeping the land in private ownership. Easements may allow selected agricultural practices such as mowing wild hay or grazing. 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. Funds were targeted to parcels in fragmented prairie landscapes that help establish larger grassland corridors. Ecologists believe larger blocks of prairie/grasslands are needed to support breeding populations of prairie birds such as greater prairie chickens and sharp tailed grouse, indicators of a functioning prairie ecosystem. TNC as a partner in this project spent an additional \$800,500 in privately raised funds to acquire prairie lands within these prairie landscapes.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Acquisition of Prairie Bank easements in these Corridors will continue using bonding funds. In Phase III the focus will shift to habitat management and enhancement of these prairie lands (Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridors/Phase III - Prairie Management, 5a)

FINAL REPORT**LCMR 2003 Work Program****Date of Report:** August 1, 2005**Date of Next Status Report:** LCMR Final Work Program Report**Date of Work program Approval:** July 9, 2003**Project Completion Date:** June 30, 2006

I. PROJECT TITLE: Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridors Phase II. Conservation Easement Programs; Native Prairie Bank 3g, (1) Aspen Parklands, (3) Border Prairie, (6) Upper Minnesota River, (7) Alexandria Moraine, (9) Des Moines River Valley, (10) Southern Lakes, and (11) Mississippi Bluff Lands.

Project Manager: Peter Buesseler**Affiliation:** DNR Ecological Services, Scientific and Natural Areas Program**Mailing Address:** 1221 E. Fir Ave**City / State / Zip :** Fergus Falls, MN**Phone Number:** 218-739-7497**E-mail Address:** peter.buesseler@dnr.state.mn.us**FAX Number:** 218-739-7601**Web Page address:** <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/prairierestoration/prairiebank.html>.

Total Biennial LCMR Project Budget: Restoring MN Fish & Wildlife Habitat Corridors

<u>Fund</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Approp</u>	<u>Liquid</u>	<u>Balance</u>
ETF	FY04/05	\$191,600	\$191,600	\$0
Grand Total		\$191,600	\$191,600	\$0

Legal Citation: ML 2003, Chp. 128, Art. 1, Sec. 9, Subd. 5a

Appropriation Language: \$4,850,000 (Env. Trust Fund) Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridors Phase II - \$2,425,000 the first year and \$2,425,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for the second biennium for acceleration of agency programs and cooperative agreements with Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., National Wild Turkey Federation, Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Land Trust, the Trust for Public Land, Minnesota Valley Trust, Inc., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Red Lake Band of Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Board of Water and Soil Resources to plan, restore, and acquire fragmented landscape corridors that connect areas of quality habitat to sustain fish, wildlife, and plants. 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 before expenditure. Expenditures are limited to the 11 project areas as defined in the work program. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum habitat and facility management standards as determined by the commissioner of natural resources. This appropriation may not be used for the purchase of residential structures unless expressly approved in the work program. 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, 2006, at which time the project must be completed and final products delivered, unless an earlier date is specified in the work program.

II & III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:

Four Native Prairie Bank perpetual easements (223 acres) were acquired by the DNR with ETF funding, and one fee-title acquisition (904 ac) was completed with TNC funds for this project.

Corridor #3 — Border Prairie Project Area

Lund 2 Prairie Bank - Douglas County (68 acres)

Corridor #6 — Upper Minnesota River Project Area

Hantho 17 Prairie Bank - Lac Qui Parle County (40 acres)

Camp Release 32 - Lac Qui Parle County (42 acres prorated to Phase I funding, 30 acres prorated to Phase II)

Corridor #7 — Alexandria Moraine Area

Ordway Prairie - Langsjoen/Hogan (TNC) - Kandiyohi County (904 acres)

Corridor #9 — Des Moines River Valley Project Area

Great Bend 29 - Cottonwood County (85 acres)

Native prairie is Minnesota's most endangered natural habitat type. We once had over 18 million acres of prairie; today less than one percent remains – mostly on private land. These lands are home to more rare and endangered plants and animals than any other natural habitat - over 100 different listed species. Native Prairie Bank easements provide permanent protection for the prairie resource while keeping the land in private ownership. Easements may allow selected agricultural practices such as mowing wild hay or grazing. 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. Funds were targeted to parcels in fragmented prairie landscapes that help establish larger grassland corridors. Ecologists believe larger blocks of prairie/grasslands are needed to support breeding populations of prairie birds such as greater prairie chickens and sharp tailed grouse, indicators of a functioning prairie ecosystem. TNC as a partner in this project spent

and additional \$800,500 in privately raised funds to acquire prairie lands within these prairie landscapes.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1: Easement Acquisition

Description: Contact private landowners, negotiate uses and acquire an estimated 155 acres in Native Prairie Bank Easements.

Summary Budget Information for Result 1:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Balance</u>	<u>Acres</u>
LCMR	\$166,600	\$174,339	*\$(7,799)*	223
Other Funds (TNC)	\$191,600	\$800,500	**\$(608,900)	904
Totals	<u>\$358,200</u>	\$974,839	\$(616,639)	1127

* Less funds were needed for Result # 2 – Professional Services, than budgeted. The balance was used for easement payments.

** TNC spent more than budgeted. The balance of \$608,900 represents a 'surplus' rather than a deficit relative to what was originally budgeted for the project.

Corridor #3 — Border Prairie Project Area

County	Tract	Acres	Cost	
			LCMR	Other Funds (TNC)
Douglas	Lund 2	68	\$48,389	
Total		68	\$48,389	

Lund 2: This project represents one of the few significantly sized remnants of dry prairie in the region (555 ac). Funding for the easement was provided through this project (\$48,389, 68 ac), 2003 bonding (\$336,606, 473 ac), and 2005 bonding (\$10,094, 14 ac) In addition to the high quality habitat there are also occurrences of three rare plant species: prairie moonwort - *Botrychium campestre* W.H.Wagner & Farrar; Hill's thistle - *Cirsium hillii* (Canby) Fernald; red three-awn grass - *Aristida purpurea* var. *longiseta* (Steud.) Vasey. All three are Species of Special Concern.

The easement is adjacent an existing 228 ac Prairie Bank easement, within the Lake Christina project area (several wetlands on the property have been restored), and within one of the Working Lands Initiative priority areas. The site has also been the focus of a research project relating to prairie birds and grazing. A Savory rotation grazing system was implemented on the property in the late 1970s with the assistance of the FWS.

Corridor #6 — Upper Minnesota River Project Area

County	Tract	Acres	Cost	
			LCMR	Other Funds (TNC)
Lac Qui Parle	Camp Release 32	30	\$20,556	
Lac Qui Parle	Hantho 17	40	\$36,229	
Total		70	\$56,785	

Hantho 17: This is a 40-acre fair to good quality mesic prairie. It abuts the Hastad WPA (911 acres) which is contiguous with the Lac Qui Parle Wildlife Management Area (~24,000 ac). It is ½ mile from the Hantho WMA (338 ac).

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 were prorated to Phase I accomplishments, 30 acres to Phase II.

Corridor #7 — Alexandria Moraine Project Area

County	Tract	Acres	Cost	
			LCMR	Other Funds (TNC)
Pope	Ordway Prairie - Langsjoen/Hogan (TNC)	904	\$800,500	
Total		904	\$800,500	

Ordway Prairie - Langsjoen/Hogan (TNC). The project area in the northwest corner of Kandiyohi County) represents one of the last significantly sized remnants of dry prairie and uncultivated pasture in the region. Scattered throughout the site, there are also large areas of shallow open water and many wetlands in small shallow basins. The project area has no roads within its boundaries and it joins two other large, undisturbed areas of native habitat (Miller Hills WPA, on the east border of the project area and Freese WPA, on the south border). The Nature Conservancy's Ordway Prairie Preserve (4 miles to the northwest) and Moe Woods Preserve (1 mile to the west) are both nearby high quality natural areas. Including this large tract of uncultivated land with the already protected area of the region would increase the importance of this already valuable landscape for native habitat and wildlife.

Corridor #9 — Des Moines River Valley Project Area

County	Tract	Acres	Cost	
			LCMR	Other Funds (TNC)
Cottonwood	Great Bend 29	85	\$69,224	
Total		85	\$68,224	

Great Bend 29: This is an 85-acre native prairie. Nearby protected lands include one native prairie bank easement within two miles, two wildlife management areas within three miles, one USFWS waterfowl protection area within one mile and one USFWS waterfowl protection area within two miles. Rare species occurrences in the area include: Kitten-tails (*Besseyia bulli*) and prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*), and upland sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)...

Completion Date: June 30, 2006.

Result 2: Professional Services

Description: These monies are used to pay for appraisals, boundary surveys, title search and other legal paper work done to secure prairie bank easements. Professional Services are not easily separated by Corridor Area and are presented for the project as a whole.

Summary Budget Information for Result 2:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Balance</u>
LCMR	\$25,000*	\$17,201	7,799

Result Status

Four easements were purchased.

Completion Date: June 30, 2006.

V. TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET::

	<u>Budget</u>
All Results: Personnel	\$ 0
All Results: Equipment	\$ 0
All Results: Development	\$ 0
All Results: Acquisition	\$166,600
All Results: Other- Professional Services	\$25,000
TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET	<u><u>\$191,600</u></u>

To complete the project in as cost effective and time efficient manner as possible, some minor budget shifts may occur between the amounts listed above for Acquisition and Other Professional Services

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$3,500: None

VI. PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SPENDING

A. Past Spending:

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

	<u>Year</u>	<u>Approp</u>	<u>Liquid</u>	<u>Encumb</u>	<u>Balance</u>
<u>Bonding</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	\$1,000,000		\$0
<u>Trust Fund</u>		0	0		
Prairie Bank	1993	\$100,000	100,000		\$0
Prairie Bank, Corridors, Phase I	2001	\$336,250	\$336,250		\$0
TOTAL		\$2,606,250	2,606,250		\$0

B. Current Spending:

Phase I Corridor funds and 2000 bonding dollars will be expended prior to using any of Phase II funds. The 2003 bonding bill provides an additional \$1 million dollars for Prairie Bank acquisition and development. This will be used for easements with landowners both inside, and outside Corridor areas. TNC as a partner in this project expects to spend an additional \$191,600 in privately raised funds to acquire lands within these prairie landscapes. This is in addition to the expenditures outlined in TNC's Phase II project, Campaign for Conservation.

C. Required Match (if applicable): None

D. Future Spending: The long-range (50 year) goal of this program is to protect 75,000 acres of native prairie on private lands. The current, statewide average cost for a Prairie Bank easement is \$850/ac (easement payment + professional services). To meet this goal will require an estimated \$60-65 million. Future acquisition monies are anticipated to come from bonding or the Trust Fund.

A. Partners Receiving LCMR Funds: None

B. Project Cooperators: The Nature Conservancy
Holy Buchanan, Land Protection Specialist
The Nature Conservancy
1101 West River Parkway, Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1291 hbuchanan@tnc.org
(612) 331-0760 (direct) (612) 331-0770 (fax)

VIII. 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.

IX. LOCATION: Easements are targeted to high priority prairie parcels in corridor areas (1) Aspen Parklands, (3) Border Prairie, (6) Upper Minnesota River, (7) Alexandria Moraine, (9) Des Moines River Valley, (10) Southern Lakes, and (11) Mississippi Bluff Lands.

X. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic work program progress reports will be submitted not later than November 30, 2003; March 30, 2004; November 30, 2004; March 30, 2005; and November 30, 2005 to LCMR. A final work program report and associated products will be submitted by June 30, 2006

Attachment A: Budget Detail for 2003 Projects - Summary and a Budget page for each partner

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

Project Manager Name: Peter Buesseler

LCMR Requested Dollars: \$191,600

Date: August 1, 2006

2003 LCMR Proposal Budget	Result 1 Budget:	Amount Spent 8/1/2006	Balance 8/1/2006	Result 2 Budget:	Amount Spent 8/1/2006	Balance 8/1/2006	Total Balance
BUDGET ITEM	Easement acquisition			Professional Services			TOTAL FOR BUDGET ITEM
PERSONNEL: Staff expenses, wages, salaries							
Contracts							
Space rental: NOT ALLOWED	X			X			
Other direct operating costs							
Equipment / Tools							
Office equipment & computers							
Other Capital equipment							
Land acquisition							
Land rights acquisition (easement)	\$166,600	\$174,399	-\$7,799				-\$7,799
Printing							
Advertising							
Communications, telephone, mail, etc.							
Office Supplies							
Other Supplies							
Travel expenses in Minnesota							
Travel outside Minnesota							
Construction							
Other land improvement:							
Other: professional services for real estate transactions				\$25,000	\$17,201	\$7,799	\$7,799
COLUMN TOTAL	\$166,600	\$174,399	-\$7,799	\$25,000	\$17,201	\$7,799	\$