

Date of Report: July 8, 1993

LCMR Work Program 1993

I. PROJECT TITLE: WFP1-1 Reinvest in Minnesota - Critical Habitat Match, Scientific and Natural Area, Wildlife, and Prairie Acquisition

Program Manager: Jay Rendall
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 500 Lafayette Road
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- A. Legal Citation: M.L. 93 Ch 172, Sec. 14, Subd. 12 (a)
- Total Biennial LCMR Budget: \$4,000,000
- Balance:

This appropriation is from the Trust Fund to the commissioner of natural resources to accelerate the Reinvest in Minnesota Program. \$2,600,000 is to protect and improve critical fish, wildlife, and native plant habitat through critical habitat match, \$1,000,000 is to acquire land for scientific and natural areas, \$300,000 is to acquire North American Waterfowl Management Plan projects, and \$100,000 is to acquire prairie bank easements to protect native prairie on private lands.

B. LMIC Compatible Data language: Not Applicable

C. Status of Match Requirement:
 Match required: \$2,600,000
 Funds raised to date: \$

LCMR funds transferred to the Critical Habitat Account cannot be expended until they are matched equally with private contributions of cash or land.

II. NARRATIVE

Critical Habitat Match provides an opportunity for private individuals, groups and businesses to help fund the cost of acquiring or improving critical fish, wildlife, and native plant habitats. State funds in the Minnesota Critical Habitat Private Sector Matching account (CHM) are matched dollar-for-dollar by restricted and unrestricted contributions of land, easements, or cash to the program. Scientific and Natural Areas are acquired to preserve and perpetuate the ecological diversity of Minnesota's natural heritage for scientific study, education, and nature observation. The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) is an intensive 15 year project to

restore breeding waterfowl populations to their 1970s levels. NAWMP goals will be attained by: acquiring and protecting existing wetlands, restoring drained wetlands, managing wetlands for wildlife production, and planting uplands with prairie and other grasses. The Native Prairie Bank program authorizes the DNR to protect native prairie by entering into conservation easements with landowners.

III. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

- A. Protect and improve priority critical fish, wildlife, and native plant habitat through Critical Habitat Match (CHM) \$2,600,000.
- B. Acquire critical lands identified by the Natural Heritage Program/County Biological Survey as Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) \$1,000,000.
- C. Acquire at least 250 acres at sites identified as North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) projects \$300,000.
- D. Acquire Prairie Bank easements to protect native prairie on private lands \$100,000.
- E. Acquire 0 acres of lands as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) \$0.

IV. OBJECTIVES

A. Title: Protect and improve critical fish, wildlife, and native plant habitat through Critical Habitat Match (CHM)

A.1. Narrative: This program provides an opportunity for private individuals, groups and businesses to help fund the cost of acquiring or improving critical fish, wildlife, and native plant habitats. State funds in the Minnesota Critical Habitat Private Sector Matching account are matched dollar-for-dollar by contributions of land, easements, or cash to the program. Projects will emphasize the protection and enhancement of habitat for endangered or threatened species, protection of uncommon or diminishing ecological communities, benefits to existing fish and wildlife populations, and enhancement of fish and wildlife oriented recreation.

In addition to acquisition, wildlife habitat may be improved in order to protect and restore wildlife populations. The most common projects are planting critical winter cover and secure nesting cover, prescribed burning, restoring wetlands and improving forest habitat. Work will also be undertaken too improve habitat for nongame species in riparian, forest, grassland, and wetland habitats. Projects will be on Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific and Natural Areas, state forests, and other public land. Most of this work is labor-intensive and is often carried out by labor crews, under contract or by local contractors.

Fisheries habitat may be protected or improved by acquiring riparian lands, stabilizing lake or stream shores, restoring aquatic vegetation, improving fish habitat in streams, reclaiming watersheds, and other fisheries management activities.

A.2 Procedures: The procedures for Critical Habitat Match will be the same as with bonding expenditures. Donations for specific projects and land donations will first be screened by area and regional fish and wildlife staff. Once approved at the local level, the projects are evaluated by a Division of Fish and Wildlife panel including the Division Director, DNR RIM Coordinator, Wildlife Land Acquisition Coordinator, Wildlife Section Chief, Fisheries Acquisition Coordinator, Fisheries Section Chief and other individuals as necessary. Donations will be evaluated according to the state statutes 84.944 (Acquisition of Critical Habitat), and DNR Commissioners Order No. 2450 (6210.0400 Priorities for the Acquisition and Improvement of Critical Natural Habitat)

Proposed projects will be ranked according to the following priorities, listed in order of decreasing importance:

- a) Potential contribution to the maintenance or enhancement of populations of native plant, fish, and wildlife species listed as endangered or threatened.
- b) Potential contribution to the protection or enhancement of native ecological communities that are now uncommon or diminishing.
- c) The benefits provided to existing or potential habitat for fish and wildlife populations.
- d) The enhancement of fish and wildlife oriented recreation.

Proposed project allocations will be submitted for LCMR approval periodically and in conjunction with submissions for bonding work program amendments.

A.3. Budget:

- a. Amount budgeted: \$2,600,000 LCMR
(\$2,600,000 Private match from multiple donors)
- b. Balance:

A.4. Timeline:

	1/93	7/93	1/94	6/94	1/95	6/95
Approve donations	-----					
Implement projects and convey land	-----					

A.5. Status:

A.6. Benefits: LCMR funds will encourage matching private donations to protect and enhance crucial habitat for fish, wildlife, and rare and endangered species, as well as provide additional areas for related recreation.

B. Title: Acquire critical lands identified by the Natural Heritage Program/County Biological Survey as Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs)

B.1. Narrative: Acquire areas of state significance consistent with the SNA long range plan because of the undisturbed plant communities, geological features, and rare and endangered species found there. It is estimated that the \$1,000,000 will protect approximately 850 acres at 8 sites statewide. Element targets have been approved by LCMR with approval of the SNA plan.

B.2. Procedures: Acquisition of sites is from willing sellers at appraised value. As a matter of practice all possibilities for gifts, partial donations, and land exchanges are explored whenever discussing protection of critical sites with landowners. Public lands are also reviewed to determine if critical elements are already protected.

B.3. Budget:

- a. Amount budgeted: \$1,000,000 LCMR
- b. Balance:

B.4. Timeline:

	7/93	1/94	7/94	1/95	7/95
Landowner contact/acquisition process	-----				

B.5. Status: Specific accomplishments will be reported in the semi annual status reports.

B.6. Benefits: Rare plant and animal species and natural communities and geological features will be protected. These sites provide opportunities for the public to view unique habitats, serve as outdoor classrooms, research laboratories, and as genetic warehouses of plant and animal material that could be used for breakthroughs in medicine, agriculture or industry.

C. Title: Acquire sites identified as North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) projects

C.1. Narrative: Acquire wetlands, restorable drained wetlands and adjacent lands within Swan Lake, Heron Lake, Minnesota River watershed and other NAWMP project areas.

C.2. Procedures: New acquisitions are identified by the DNR Section of Wildlife. Parcels of land are purchased from willing sellers within these NAWMP priority areas. Acquisitions will be submitted for a match under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. Federal match will be used to purchase additional lands, fund development projects, or provide administrative and operational costs.

C.3. Budget:

- a. Amount budgeted: \$300,000 LCMR (potential for equal federal match)
- b. Balance:

C.4. Timeline:

	7/93	1/94	7/94	1/95	7/95
Land conveyance process	-----				
Submit projects for federal match	-----				
Receive federal match	-----				

C.5. Status: Specific accomplishments will be reported in the semi annual status reports.

C.6. Benefits: Continue progress of three significant NAWMP watershed projects and initiate new projects that may generate federal and private match. To date, \$3 million of federal matching funds have been obtained and significant progress toward habitat goals have been realized in Minnesota.

D. Title: Acquire Prairie Bank easements to protect native prairie on private lands

D.1. Narrative: This program protects native prairie through conservation easements. Approximately 5 tracts of native prairie, protecting 350 acres on private lands would be enrolled in Prairie Bank. The Native Prairie Bank Program authorized the DNR to protect native prairie by entering into conservation easements with landowners. To date, these are all perpetual easements. Easements may be of limited duration (a minimum of 20 years), however priority must be given to permanent easements. The purpose of these easements is to provide protection for the prairie resource while still allowing the land to remain in private ownership. Easements may allow selected agricultural practices such as mowing for wild hay.

D.2. Procedures: To be eligible for Prairie Bank a tract must be covered by native prairie vegetation, must never have been plowed, and must have less than 10% tree cover. Tracts are prioritized based on County Biological Survey data, jeopardy, and adjacent ownership.

FY 94-95 Prairie Bank Priority Sign-up Areas
(Based on goal of 2000 ac/yr)

Enrollment Area	County	Acres	Cost
Red River Valley Beach Ridges	Kittson, Marshall, Polk, Pennington, Red lake, Norman, Clay	1500	\$525,000
Minnesota River Valley	Traverse, Bigstone, Lac qui Parle, Swift, Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Renville, Redwood, Brown, Nicollet, Blue Earth, LeSeur	800	\$280,000
Alexander Moraine	Douglas, Pope, Swift, Kandiyohi	600	\$210,000
Prairie Coteau Escarpment	Lincoln, Murry, Nobles, Jackson	600	\$210,000
Sioux Quartzite Outcrops	Pipestone, Rock	300	\$105,000
Cannon River/Mississippi River Blufflands	Rice, Goodhue, dakota, Wabasha, Winina, Houston	200	\$70,000
Totals		4000	\$1,400,000

D.3. Budget:

a. Amount budgeted: \$100,000

b. Balance:

D.4. Timeline: 7/93 1/94 7/94 1/95 7/95
Easement acquisition -----

D.5. Status: Specific accomplishments will be reported in the semi annual status reports.

D.6. Benefits: Protection of native prairie in private ownership where most of the one percent of the remaining native prairie is located.

E. Title: Acquire 0 acres of lands as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)

E.1. Narrative: Acquire critical wildlife habitat with a main emphasis on completing existing wildlife management areas. (information on over \$3 million of high priority parcels with willing sellers is available)

E.2. Procedures: not applicable

E.3. Budget: none

E.4. Timeline: not applicable

E.5. Status:

E.6. Benefits: Ensure the future of wildlife populations and quality outdoor experiences in spite of historic and continuing habitat losses and greater demands for outdoor recreation.

IV. EVALUATION

CHM makes Minnesota better by encouraging contributions and putting them to work to protect Minnesota's natural heritage and quality of life. We know that the best available critical habitat is accepted or improved because of the front end CHM prioritization process which ranks endangered or threatened species and uncommon or diminishing habitats first and second respectively. Also, achieving the matching donation and increasing the diversity of donors will provide a measure of the public's support for this public - private partnership.

The Minnesota Natural Heritage Program and the County Biological Survey identifies and prioritizes natural areas sites needing protection. Acquisition of these priority sites as SNAs will ensure the best remaining natural areas are protected for Minnesota citizens.

NAWMP projects will be within regionally established priority areas so they will significantly contribute to state, regional and federal waterfowl management goals.

Prairie Bank acquisitions will be prioritized and acquired based on willing sellers. Prioritization of sites will ensure the best available native prairie will be protected for future generations of Minnesota citizens.

V. CONTEXT:

A. The state's fish, wildlife, and native plant resources need ongoing protection. The Governor's Citizen Commission to Promote Hunting and Fishing in Minnesota found that increasing demands for recreation, accelerated loss of habitat, and lack of investment in the resource base would negatively affect fish and wildlife - and those who value them. The concept of RIM was intended to increase public and private funding for critical habitat of fish, wildlife, and native plants beyond the traditional game and fish fund. Special funds generated from the small game license surcharge are relatively small compared to the statewide needs for habitat acquisition. More sites are available and need protection than there are funds available to acquire them. Many of these sites are irreplaceable and need protection before they are destroyed.

B. The proposed LCMR funding and future projects will supplement activities funded by the game and fish fund, past bonding appropriations, and special funds that are used for habitat acquisition.

C. Most of the past accomplishments for these objectives were possible through bonding funds.

Past accomplishments since July 1, 1986 without LCMR recommended funding:

- 387 Donations of Cash valued at \$1,954,203
- 108 Donations of 10,744 acres of land valued at \$4,568,685.
- Acquisition of 9259 acres of critical habitat at 112 tracts.
- Improvement of 20,170 acres of critical habitat.
- Acquisition of 2632 acres of SNAs at 12 sites.
- Acquisition of 108 tracts of WMAs totaling 11,890 acres.
- Acquisition of 1380 acres of perpetual Prairie Bank Easements at 13 sites.

WMA Surcharge:

Acquisition of 51 tracts of WMAs totaling 7,194 acres

Past accomplishments since July 1, 1986 with LCMR recommended funding:

- Acquisition of 4000 acres in NAWMP projects.
- Acquisition of 571 acres of SNAs at 2 sites.

Future proposals: As the county biological survey identifies new rare ecological features, and other uncommon or diminishing habitats are identified in other ways, we will need the financial resources to protect those sites. In future bienniums, similar proposals will be submitted to LCMR and the full legislature for acquisition of critical fish, wildlife, and native plant habitats. Continued funding at similar levels will be needed to reach long term acquisition goals.

VII. QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Program Manager

- a. B.S. Natural Resource Analysis and Management, University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1976
- b. Division of Fish and Wildlife - Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Coordinator, Reinvest In Minnesota Program (1989 - present)

2. Cooperators / Other Investigators

Donations for specific critical habitat match projects and land donations will first be screened by area and regional fish and wildlife staff. Once approved at the local level, the projects are evaluated by a Division of Fish and Wildlife panel including the Division Director, DNR RIM Coordinator, Wildlife Acquisition Coordinator, Wildlife Section Chief, Fisheries Section Chief Fisheries Acquisition Coordinator and other individuals as necessary.

Other DNR cooperators for objectives B to E include:

- Kim Hennings DNR Wildlife Acquisition Coordinator
- Bob Djupstrom, DNR SNA Supervisor
- Tom Landwehr, DNR Wetland Wildlife Program Leader
- Peter Buessler, DNR Prairie Biologist

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Semiannual status reports will be submitted not later than January 1, 1994, July 1, 1994, January 1, 1995 and a final status report by June 30, 1995.