

FINAL REPORT

JAN 02 2003

1999 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2002

TITLE: National Prairie Passage – Linking Isolated Prairie Preserves With Corridors

PROJECT MANAGER: Robert L. Jacobson

ORGANIZATION: Minnesota Department of Transportation

ADDRESS: MS 620

395 John Ireland Blvd.

St. Paul, MN 55155

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

FUND:

LEGAL CITATION: ML 1999, Ch. 231, Sec. 16, Subd. 13 (b)

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$ 150,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

A sign featuring prairie coneflower was created to mark Prairie Passage routes and designated Prairie Passage sites in the six partnering Prairie Passage states. A 535-mile route through western Minnesota was selected as Minnesota's Prairie Passage Route. Thirty-six natural, historical and cultural areas were selected as Prairie Passage sites. The route and sites were selected with public involvement. Four hundred and eighty acres of land in Blue Mounds and Camden State Parks, Black Rush Lake Waterfowl Production Area and the adjacent Highway 23 and 75 corridors was seeded with native prairie grasses and wildflowers. Seed totaling 23,281 pounds, was harvested from local prairies for use in the restorations. An additional 9,845 pounds of seed was purchased from local native seed producers to complete the restoration plantings. The plantings have been periodically mowed to increase the success of the restorations and prevent noxious weed problems. A series of three posters depicting tallgrass prairie plants, animals and cultures were developed and are being distributed throughout the southwest part of the state. Four informational kiosks were developed for placement at two wayside rests and at Blue Mounds and Camden State Parks. A self-guided Prairie Restoration Interpretive Trail was created for Camden State Park. An Explore Southwestern Minnesota's Prairie Passage brochure was created for distribution at Minnesota Office of Tourism/MnDOT Travel Information Centers, convention visitor bureaus, state parks, museums, and historic sites. A general Prairie Passage brochure was created for use in the six partnering Prairie Passage states. Each state printed its own supply of brochures. A Guide to Minnesota's Prairie Passage Route and Sites was created for distribution throughout Minnesota's tourism outlets. Six public meetings were held; eighteen presentations were given at conferences, workshops, and meetings. Prairie Passage poster displays were presented at three state and national conferences.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

The National Prairie Passage is a concept that was proposed in the early 1980's as a scenic country drive where people could travel and enjoy prairie wildflowers growing along roadsides. Since then, the concept of the Prairie Passage has grown in scope. In Minnesota, we envision the Prairie Passage to be the creation of the network of tall grass prairie preserves that are connected by corridors of prairie along roadsides or other rights-of-way. At a national level, the Prairie Passage extends from Canada through Texas. Within this framework, communities, local units of government, states and the federal government will be able to partner to promote a network of scenic drives

leading to various points of interest relating to both the cultural and natural resource of the tall grass prairie in North America. The project will benefit the prairie ecosystem by linking isolated preserves with corridors of prairie, thus reversing some of the existing fragmentation of the prairie landscape. Wildlife will benefit from increased high quality grassland habitat that continuous linkage can provide. Local communities will benefit by being able to promote local tourism based on cultural and natural resources of the tall grass prairie. Road authorities will benefit from planting and managing prairie along roads, which should decrease their maintenance costs and herbicide usage. Local growers and producers of prairie plants and seeds will benefit from their products being used for restoring the prairie landscape.

Date of Report: December 18,
LCMR Final Work Program Report

Project Completion Date: June 30, 2002

LCMR Work Program 1999

I. Project Title: National Prairie Passage-Linking Isolated Prairie Preserves with Corridors

Project Manager: Robert L. Jacobson and David Breyfogle

Affiliation: Mn/DOT and Mn/DNR

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mailing Address: Mail Stop 620 | Blue Mounds State Park |
| 395 John Ireland Boulevard | RR1, Box 52 |
| St. Paul, Minnesota 55155 | Luverne, MN 56156-9610 |

Telephone Number: 651-284-3767 and (507)283-1312
E-mail: robert.jacobson@dot.state.mn.us and david.breyfogle@dnr.state.mn.us
Fax: 651-284-3784 and (507)283-1306
Web Page Address: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/engserv/environment/>

Total Biennial Project Budget: \$750,000

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| \$LCMR: \$150,000 | \$ TEA21 Match: \$600,000 |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| - LCMR Amount Spent: \$150,000 | - \$ Match Amount Spent: \$ 393,885 |
| = LCMR Balance: \$ 0 | = Match Balance: \$ 206,115 |

A. Legal Citation: ML 1999, [Chap.231], Sec.[16]. Subd.(13b)

Appropriation Language:

Carryforward Language: ML 2001, 1st Special Session, Chp. 2, Sec. 14, Subd. 8, paragraph (a): The availability of the appropriation for the following project is extended to June 30, 2002: ML 1999, Chp 231, Sec. 16, subd.013(b)National Prairie Passage; Linking Isolated Prairie Preserves \$75,000 the first year and \$75,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of transportation to link isolated tall grass prairie preserves with corridors of prairie. This appropriation must be matched by at least \$600,000 of non state money.

B. Status of Match Requirement:

NOTE: All matching funds, unless otherwise specified, will be obtained from TEA21 funds (funds from the new Federal Transportation Act, formerly ISTEA Enhancement Funds).

Activity 1 - Development of National Prairie Passage Sign

Timeline - development of signs will begin July 1, 1999, production will be done in the winter of 2000, and initial signage of routes will be finished by June 30, 2001

Activity 2 - Restoration/enhancement plantings and seedings

Timeline - July 1, 1999 through June 30, 2001. Seeding will begin in fall 1999 and signs/kiosks will be installed in second year of biennium.

Activity 3 - Marketing materials and brochures

Timeline - Materials will be developed starting July 1, 1999 and will be distributed by June 30, 2001.

II. PROJECT SUMMARY RESULTS

The National Prairie Passage is intended to be a type of scenic byway that combines aspects of "ecotourism" with natural resource protection and enhancement at a national level (see context). Surveys conducted over the past 25 years have found that the total acreage of prairie remnants in highway rights-of-way has declined by 50% since the first survey was conducted in the 1970's. The project will be an ongoing effort at the Minnesota Department of Transportation to identify and protect these prairie remnants and promote "ecotourism" in the corridor. The funding provided by the LCMR and matched with TEA-21 funds during the 1999 LCMR cycle is intended to provide a "kick start" to the program in Minnesota and to provide a model for other states to follow as they pursue funding for the Prairie Passage in their respective states. Much of the ground work performed from 1999 to 2001 will provide information that is used in further planning and construction efforts by Mn/DOT. In addition, initial "linkages" will be started at three locations in Minnesota with the final product being a contiguous connection between preserves being formed and buffers being established to protect existing prairies. Collaboration will be sought with similar efforts sponsored by other agencies (i.e., USFWS Tallgrass Prairie Project and US Army Corps of Engineers Filter Strips), and other private/non-profit groups (i.e. Pheasants Forever and The Nature Conservancy).

III. PROGRESS SUMMARY:

Date: December 18, 2002

Activity 1 - Development of National Prairie Passage Sign.

A sign featuring prairie coneflower has been created that will mark Prairie Passage routes and designated Prairie Passage sites in the six partnering Prairie Passage states.

Activity 2 - Restoration/enhancement plantings and seedings

Four hundred and eighty acres of land in Blue Mounds and Camden State Parks, Black Rush Lake Waterfowl Production Area and the adjacent Highway 23 and 75 corridors was seeded with native prairie grasses and wildflowers. Seed totaling 23,281 pounds, was harvested from local prairies for use in the restorations. An additional 9,845 pounds of seed was purchased to complete the restoration plantings. The plantings have been periodically mowed to increase the success of the restorations and prevent noxious weed problems. A series of three posters depicting prairie plants, animals and cultures were

developed and are being distributed throughout the southwest part of the state. Four informational kiosks were developed for placement at two wayside rests and at Blue Mounds and Camden State Parks. A self guided Prairie Restoration Interpretive Trail was created for Camden State park. An Explore Southwestern Minnesota's Prairie Passage brochure was created for distribution at Travel Information Centers, Convention Visitor Bureaus, state parks, museums, and historic sites.

Activity 3 - Marketing materials and brochures

A general Prairie Passage brochure was created for use in the six partnering Prairie Passage states. The brochure was created by Mn/DOT. Each state printed it's own supply of brochures. A Guide to Minnesota's Prairie Passage Route and Sites was created for distribution throughout Minnesota's tourism outlets. Six public meetings were held; fifteen presentations given at conferences, workshops, and meetings were given. Prairie Passage poster displays were presented at three state and national conferences.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS

Date: December 18, 2002

Result 1 - Development of National Prairie Passage Sign.

Budget - LCMR = \$20,000 Match = \$ 80,000

Balance - LCMR = \$ 0 Match = \$ 59,933

Sign development and production

Description - The national design for the Prairie Passage signs was created by MN/DOT. Eighty 2' X 2' route signs will mark the 535 mile Prairie Passage route from the Manitoba Minnesota border to the Minnesota Iowa border. The design features a yellow prairie coneflower, a native prairie species common across the midwest prairie states. The blue and black background represent the open prairie landscape and the deep rich prairie soils. Signs were fabricated by the MN/DOT Sign Shop.

Due to funding constraints with the TEA-21 match, the cost of installing the signs, estimated at \$24,300, could not be charged to the appropriated funds. Signs were installed by DOT district staff and installation costs assumed by DOT labor budgets.

Completion date(s) - Installation of signs was completed in October 2002.

Result 2 - Restoration / enhancement plantings and seedings

Budget - LCMR = \$115,000 Match = \$ 460,000

Balance - LCMR = \$ 0 Match = \$ 146,182

I. **Signs/kiosks materials** - Budget = \$ 60,000 Balance = \$ 0

II. **Signs/kiosks development** - Budget = \$ 72,500 Balance = \$ 20,100

III. **Seeding & Planting** - Budget = \$ 442,500 Balance = \$ 126,082

Description - Four hundred and eighty acres of land in Blue Mounds and Camden State Parks, Black Rush Lake Waterfowl Production Area and the adjacent Highway 23 and 75

corridors was seeded with native prairie grasses and wildflowers. Seed totaling 23,281 pounds, was harvested from local prairies for use in the restorations. An additional 9,845 pounds of seed was purchased to complete the restoration plantings. The restoration sites were burned and treated with herbicide in preparation for planting. The plantings have been mowed three and four times to increase the success of the restorations and prevent noxious weed problems. Minnesota Conservation Corps crews were hired to assist with harvesting, site preparation and maintenance.

A series of three posters depicting prairie plants, animals and cultures were developed and are being distributed throughout the southwest part of the state. Four kiosks, each with three informational panels, were developed for placement at wayside rests near Marshall and Luverne and at Blue Mounds and Camden State Parks. A self guided Prairie Restoration Interpretive Trail was created for Camden State park. An "Explore Southwestern Minnesota's Prairie Passage" brochure was created for distribution at Travel Information Centers, convention visitor bureaus, state parks, museums, and historic sites.

The final \$20,100 in the Signs/Kiosks development contract section will be paid upon installation of the kiosks by the contractor.

Due to lack of seed availability from appropriate sources and ranges, 245.1 acres of lands was not seeded within in the proposed project area, but will be with the remaining TEA-21 funds during the next growing seasons.

Completion date(s) - Installation of kiosks by Pacific Studios Contractor in Signs/Kiosks development: August 31, 2002.

Result 3 - Marketing materials and brochures

Budget - LCMR = \$15,000 Match = \$60,000

Balance -LCMR = \$ 0 Match = \$ 0

Description - A Guide to Minnesota's Prairie Passage Route and Sites was created by MN/DOT staff. Some photography was purchased. The guide will continue to be distributed at MN/DOT and Minnesota Office of Tourism Travel Information Centers, Convention Visitor Bureaus along the Prairie Passage Route, Prairie Passage Sites and other tourism promotion locations throughout the state. A general Prairie Passage brochure was created for use in all six partnering Prairie Passage and continues to be distributed throughout Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Six public meetings were held across the western prairie part of Minnesota. Thirty-six natural, cultural, historical, and archeaological sites were identified for designation at Prairie Passage Sites. A 535 mile route between Manitoba, Canada and Iowa was identified and signed as the Prairie Passage Route in Minnesota. Five communities along the Highway 32 portion of the Prairie Passage Route have initiated a cooperative working relationship focusing on the tourism and economic development potentials based on their prairie natural and cultural resources. Several communities in southwestern Minnesota are working on similar efforts.

Prairie Passage was selected by the Landscape Ecology Department at North Dakota State University as the spring semester seminar topic. Twenty students researched and proposed interpretive and recreational development projects for the communities along the Highway 32 segment of the Prairie Passage Route.

V. DISSEMINATION

The National Prairie Passage will be a project/program that will involve the collaboration of numerous communities in Minnesota. For the purpose of the 1999 LCMR project, it is intended that at least one article will be published in the DNR Volunteer, maps indicating the locations of exemplary prairies with information kiosks, etc., will be developed and disbursed at Travel Information Centers (TIC's) and other rest areas, through the DNR at state parks and the book store, and by the Department of Tourism. Information about the Prairie Passage will also be published on the Mn/DOT Office of Environmental Services (OES) web site. Presentations about the Prairie Passage will be made on an ongoing basis by various project state and collaborators.

VI. CONTEXT

A. Significance: The National Prairie Passage is a concept that was proposed in the early 1980's as a scenic country drive where people could travel and enjoy prairie wildflowers growing along roadsides. Since then, the concept of the Prairie Passage has grown in scope. In Minnesota, we envision the Prairie Passage to be the creation of the network of tall grass prairie preserves that are connected by corridors of prairie along roadsides or other rights-of-way. At a national level, the Prairie Passage extends from Canada through Texas. Within this framework, communities, local units of government, states and the federal government will be able to partner to promote a network of scenic drives leading to various points of interest relating to both the cultural and natural resource of the tall grass prairie in North America. The project will benefit the prairie ecosystem by linking isolated preserves with corridors of prairie, thus reversing some of the existing fragmentation of the prairie landscape. Wildlife will benefit from increased high quality grassland habitat that continuous linkage can provide. Local communities will benefit by being able to promote local tourism based on cultural and natural resources of the tall grass prairie. Road authorities will benefit from planting and managing prairie along roads which should decrease their maintenance costs and herbicide usage. Local growers and producers of prairie plants and seeds will benefit from their products being used for restoring the prairie landscape.

B. Time: The National Prairie Passage Project / Program will be ongoing, similar to the Great River Road, with funding to be provided through TEA21. It is not anticipated that we will require additional time to complete the 1999 LCMR projects. Additional proposals may be submitted to LCMR by collaborators in the future.

C. Budget and Context: Initial National Prairie Passage coordinating efforts have been funded by the Federal Highway Administration for a period of two years (1996-1998). We hope to obtain local funds from the LCMR and Mn/DOT and obtain matching funds from ISTEA to expand the program in Minnesota. The project manager has completed two ISTEA enhancement projects designed to reverse landscape fragmentation in Jackson

County (Heron Lake) and in Lincoln County (Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie owned by The Nature Conservancy).

LCMR Budget History: None
Non-LCMR Budget History: \$50,000, Federal Highway Administration
\$150,000 ISTE A Enhancement/Mn/DOT/DNR
Total Dollars: \$200,000

1.

BUDGET (LCMR):

Acquisition: None
Development: Seed, seedlings and miscellaneous, site preparation materials - \$85,500
Other: Travel and lodging for meetings with other states - \$3,000
Travel and lodging for field review activities - \$6,000
Prairie Passage Signs - \$17,000
Kiosks/interpretive signs - Materials - \$9,000
Kiosks/interpretive signs - Design - \$14,500
Brochures and other printed materials - \$15,000

TOTAL: \$150,000

2. Submit a budget detail with all the specifics as attached as Attachment A.

VII. COOPERATION

Date: December 18, 2002

Project Personnel

Project Manager: Robert L. Jacobson (Mn/DOT)

Project Coordinator: Kathryn E. Bolin, Prairie Passage Coordinator / Minnesota

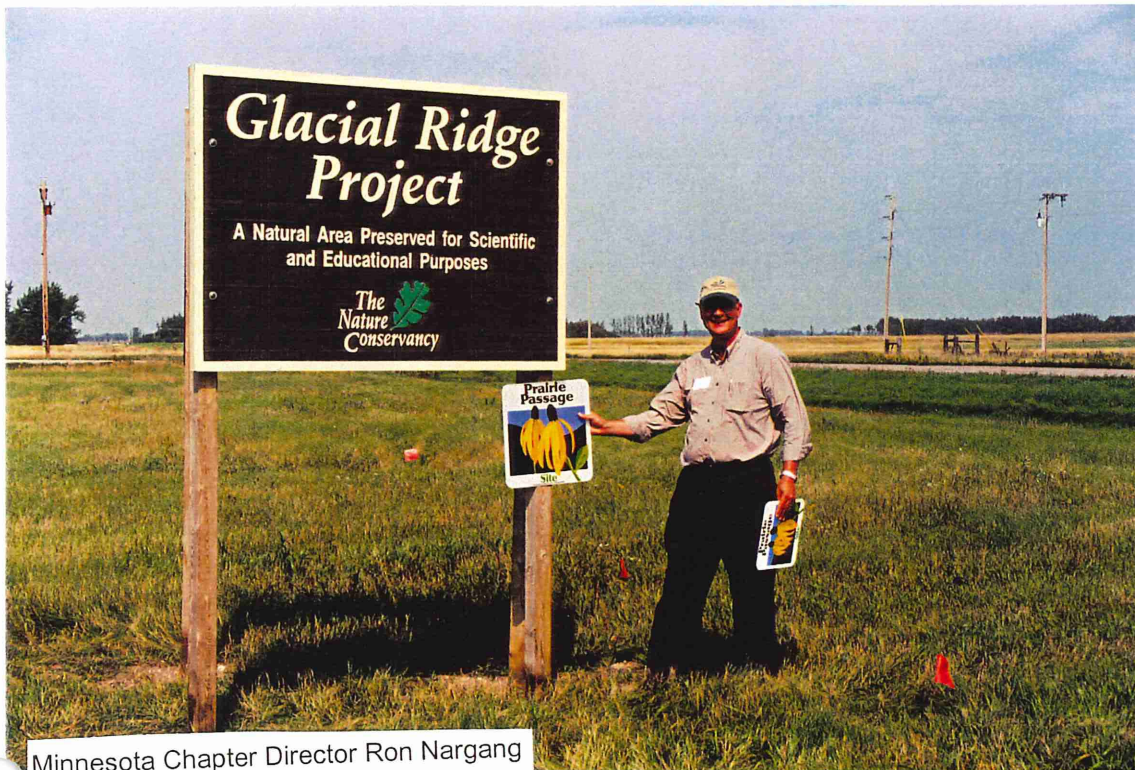
VIII. LOCATION: This project will impact most of the counties in the western and southwestern portions of Minnesota. Two state parks have been proposed to be project areas for the 1999 LCMR project; Camden and Blue Mounds State parks. In general, all of the prairie region of the state will be considered for inclusion into the Prairie Passage concept. The following communities have contacted Mn/DOT regarding the Prairie Passage project: Moorhead, Fairmont, Warren, Argyle, Montevideo, St. Cloud, Fergus Falls, Worthington and Morris. Many regional groups have also been formed and have indicated a strong desire to assist with restoration and preservation efforts.

IX. Reporting Requirements: Periodic work program progress reports will be submitted annually. The first report will be submitted on January 1, 2000. A final work program report and associated products will be submitted by June 30, 2001, or by the completion date as set in the appropriation.

X. Research Projects: NA

Examples of Prairie Passage Signage at sites and along the Prairie Passage Route:

Northwestern Minnesota:



Minnesota Chapter Director Ron Nargang
At Glacial Ridge Project Headquarters
Near Crookston, Minnesota



Bluestem Prairie Scientific and Natural Area
Informational sign near Glyndon, Minnesota



Rest area at Rothsay on I-94. Interpretive kiosk
about area prairies and prairie resources including
Prairie Passage logo and information.

Southwestern Minnesota:



Route sign on Prairie Passage Route
Highway 23 near Pipestone, Minnesota



Site sign at Jeffers Petroglyphs Historic Site
near Comfrey, Minnesota