

M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 02, Subd. 08a as extended by M.L. 2020, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Sec. 2 M.L. 2020 - Sec. 2. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND; EXTENSIONS. [to June 30, 2021]
Project Abstract For the Period Ending June 30, 2021

PROJECT TITLE: Nongame Wildlife Program Acceleration

PROJECT MANAGER: Kristin A. L. Hall

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FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 02, Subd. 08a as extended by M.L. 2020, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Sec. 2 M.L. 2020 - Sec. 2. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND; EXTENSIONS. [to June 30, 2021]

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$ 220,000

AMOUNT SPENT: \$ 220,000

AMOUNT REMAINING: \$ 0

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

Funds from this grant helped us prioritize collaborative efforts in our Conservation Focus Areas. We successfully conducted 10 habitat improvement projects on over 200 acres for multiple Species in Greatest Conservation Need including: bottomland forest songbirds, prairie pollinators, Blanding's turtles, and oak savanna dependent species.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Results of this project can be broken down into three separate categories: habitat work, monitoring efforts and research. We surpassed our goals for the habitat restoration piece of this grant mainly due to the partnership aspect of Conservation Focus Areas. We were able to provide partial funding that leveraged broader participation in conservation actions. In total, this project enabled us to:

- plant 765 sapling trees in bottloland forest habitat to help with reforestation efforts,
- plant 6,000 oak saplings in oak savanna habitat on 17 acres at Meadow Brook WMA,
- conduct prairie forb inter-seed plantings on 45 acres of prairie grassland at three different locations,
- contribute to 102 acres or prescribed fire management to reduce succession and overgrowth of woody vegetation in grasslands,
- restore a sandy shoreline for turtle nesting habitat.

All activities took place in at least one of the four activated CFAs (see map: *Conservation Focus Areas (CFA) Status 2015-205 MN Wildlife Action Plan*).

An important component of conducting habitat improvement work is monitoring the species response to management. These efforts were focused primarily on prairie habitat restoration activities in the southwest and southeast portion of the state. Both flora and fauna response has been measured prior to the restoration activity, during the establishment of the restoration and post management. These data will provide managers with information on ways to potentially adapt their management practices to better accommodate the species the habitat restoration is meant to benefit.

Research and monitoring are a top priority for the Nongame Wildlife Program, which uses status and trend data to determine the protection status of many nongame species. This grant helped us to conduct a pilot study for a

new research project to better understand the recent declines of American kestrels. The pilot efforts resulted in a full scale project proposal for a federal grant which was awarded in spring of 2021.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Conservation Focus Areas are one of the main implementation tools in our State Wildlife Action Plan and we celebrate the work being done throughout the CFA network in many of our communications. Our Nongame Wildlife Program [facebook page](#) has featured some of the CFA habitat projects as well as the kestrel research. We have also created a 34 page, [Wildlife Action Plan 5-year Report](#), featuring highlights on how the plan is funded and the work we do. This report will be available to the public as well as our supporters to provide a fun “behind the scenes” look at how our program operates.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

M.L. 2018 ENRTF Work Plan (Main Document)

Today's Date: 1 September 2021

Date of Final Report: 1 September 2021

Date of Work Plan Approval: 06/05/2018

Project Completion Date: June 30, 2021

Does this submission include an amendment request? Yes

PROJECT TITLE: Nongame Wildlife Program Acceleration

Project Manager: Kristin A. L. Hall

Organization: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

College/Department/Division: Division of Ecological and Water Resources

Mailing Address: Box 26, DNR, 500 Lafayette Road

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Web Address: www.mndnr.gov

Location: Statewide

Total Project Budget: \$220,000

Amount Spent: \$220,000

Balance: \$0

Legal Citation: M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 02, Subd. 08a as extended by M.L. 2020, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Sec. 2

Appropriation Language: \$220,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources to accelerate the nongame wildlife program including rare wildlife data collection, habitat management, collaborative land protection, conservation education, and a new emphasis on promoting nature tourism to benefit wildlife, visitors, and rural communities.

M.L. 2020 - Sec. 2. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND; EXTENSIONS. [to June 30, 2021]

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Nongame Wildlife Program is entrusted with the conservation of Minnesota's wildlife that are not traditionally hunted or harvested. This represents over 1000 species of wildlife. These species are integral parts of our landscapes, providing ecological and economic benefits, educational opportunities and recreational enjoyment for Minnesotans. The Nongame Wildlife Program is regarded as one of the most effective and successful conservation programs of its kind in the nation.

This proposal will accelerate the delivery and effectiveness of the program by providing a partial match to the approximately \$1 million that citizens donate to the program annually, primarily through a voluntary checkoff on their state tax returns. Donations from tax returns, which had averaged over \$1 million annually, dropped during the 2008 recession and have been slow to recover to previous levels but are now approaching \$1 million/year. This has prevented the Nongame Wildlife Program from keeping up with the demands for conserving and managing nongame wildlife habitats and providing the public with recreational opportunities focused on nongame wildlife.

Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan, which directs much of the work of the Nongame Wildlife Program, was updated in 2015. The plan identifies a statewide "Wildlife Action Network" as a strategy for maintaining and enhancing habitat for all wildlife. Within the network, habitat management efforts will be concentrated with support from conservation partners in "Conservation Focus Areas" where effectiveness and long-term outcomes will be tracked. These efforts will support other conservation efforts such as the MN Prairie Conservation Plan, and it helps ensure that our conservation efforts maintain healthy and diverse wildlife populations and ecosystems into the future.

II. OVERALL PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:

Amendment Request 19 September 2018:

We would like to make a non-monetary amendment due to staff changes and to better align project reporting with our fiscal calendar by requesting following changes:

- Shift the reporting dates from January 31 and June 30 to on March 1 and September 1 (annually) to better align with our internal fiscal calendar which allows for a more comprehensive report
- Remove Carrol Henderson from the project as he is retiring from the DNR effective October 2nd 2018
- Add Kristin Hall, Conservation Focus Area Coordinator, as the project manager replacing Carrol Henderson

Thank you for your consideration of this request

Amendment Approved: 09/19/2018

First Update March 1, 2019

To date, we have initiated the activation process on three Conservation Focus Areas (CFA). The stated goal of the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan is to implement at least six of the 36 proposed CFAs by 2025. The activation process involves establishing a partnership committed to working together to advance conservation of Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) within a specific area. Once the partnership is established, the group then works together to identify a set of specific, near term and achievable objectives using the S.M.A.R.T. (Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable and Time-bound) framework. Once objectives are identified and agreed upon, then the partnership sets out to implement those objectives. These objectives act as the CFA work plan, actively updated in order to document accomplishments and identify challenges as time goes on.

Second Update September 1, 2019

Over the past 6 months Conservation Focus Area outreach and coordination efforts have continued and monitoring and management efforts were implemented. Due to the collaborative nature of CFAs, our goals of activating “at least one” area and implementing monitoring on “at least three” sites have already been exceeded. Currently we are working with broad partnerships in 3 active CFAs and have plans to launch a fourth in the near future. Monitoring activities have taken place on 7 sites within 3 CFAs and enhancement work was conducted on 21 acres. By going through the S.M.A.R.T objective process we were able to recognize opportunities and shared goals between multiple CFAs that have similar habitats, especially with respect to the monitoring aspects of this work.

Amendment request 14 Feb 2020:

We would like to request both a retroactive and proactive amendment. For the retroactive request we would like to transfer \$13,161 from the Professional/Technical/Service Contracts line for data collection to the Personnel: Surveyors line item. We were able to use existing staff to conduct species monitoring within Conservation Focus Areas and therefore did not need to go the more expensive contracted services route. Transferring these funds would result in a correction to our previous reporting (26 August 2019) where I had mistakenly accounted for the funds spent on staff conducting the surveys under the contracted surveyors line (\$5,319). This amount is now included in the total spent for surveyors (cell 17D on the budget). We did conduct vegetation surveys via a Professional/ Technical/Service contract in the amount of \$3,611 and have included that amount accurately under the Amount Spent column (19D). Similarly, we would like to request moving \$3,553 from the Professional/Technical/Service Contracts line for data collection line to the Travel expenses line in order to cover the travel needs of surveyors. This activity took place during the 2019 field season and the requested transfer represents known funds spent on these activities as of 3 February 2020. This activity is complete.

The proactive request includes moving \$21,000 of Professional/Technical/Service Contracts line for data collection to the Professional/Technical/Service Contracts line for habitat management. With the savings incurred from using internal staff we are able to put more funding into habitat management efforts within our CFAs. The final request is to transfer \$9,000 from Professional/Technical/Service Contracts line for data collection to Equipment/Tools/Supplies: wildlife survey for monitoring activities that would include avian radio telemetry equipment (purchase of transmitters and receivers) for a project focused on American Kestrels (SGCN) to take place within the Brainerd Lakes CFA. This transfer reflects the need for the specific equipment rather than contracting a technician’s time to achieve part of outcome #2 “collecting baseline data to be used for effectiveness monitoring.”

In total this request does not change the overall budgeted total of this grant but moves funds in order to more accurately reflect the actions of the CFA program as it has developed. To summarize, this request is to move a total of \$46,714 from the Professional/Technical/Service Contracts line for data collection to Salary, Travel, Equipment, and Professional/Technical/Service Contracts for habitat management line items. This request, if granted, would result in:

- \$18,286 for the Professional/Technical/Service Contracts line for data collection
- \$76,014 for the Professional/Technical/Service Contracts line for habitat management
- \$13,161 available for Personnel: Surveyors
- \$3,553 available for Travel: Wildlife surveys
- \$9,000 available for Equipment: Wildlife survey supplies – avian telemetry.

Kristin Hall contacted Michael Varian on 22 January 2020 to discuss the amendment process and why these changes were being requested. Michael was very helpful and recommended the retroactive and proactive amendment approach to best reflect what has occurred. Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions or concerns regarding this amendment. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Amendment Approved by LCCMR: 23 March 2020

Third Update March 1, 2020

The CFA program has been successfully launched due to this award with each CFA partnership making tangible progress in working toward common goals. The species monitoring work that was piloted last summer (2019) is being extended and will continue with additional state and federal funds. While the habitat enhancement efforts within CFAs took longer to initiate, we have really seen great progress within the past 6 months. We have been able to coordinate and contribute to 7 distinct projects focused on habitat enhancement for SGCN within 4 different CFAs. The original goal of enhancing at least 40 acres within 1 or 2 CFAs will be easily surpassed by the end of this grant period. The success of this program is due to partnerships creating the foundation of this work.

Project extended to June 30, 2021 by LCCMR 6/18/20 as a result of M.L. 2020, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Sec. 2, legislative extension criteria being met.

Amendment Request 1 Sept 2020:

We would like to make two-line item requests to transfer funds between items and one minor correction to a previously reported expense. These request do not change the overall monetary amount of the project but they do allow us to better implement the project actions as intended. The first request would be to transfer \$14,675 of funds from the contracted services line item for baseline data collection to the surveyor staff line (resulting in a total of \$27,836 for the surveyor staff line). This request is based on the unforeseen circumstances of Covid 19 which interrupted field work, hiring and contracting procedures. While we were not able to develop a contract for this work, existing staff is able to conduct the Conservation Focus Area specific surveys.

The Contracted services surveyor line (budget row 19) also needs an expenses correction. I inadvertently reported a total of \$3,611 in the spent column in my third project report (March 2020). In actuality, only \$2,500 of those contracted funds have been spent, the remaining \$1,111 is encumbered in a contract that remains to be executed.

The final line item request is to move \$1,712 in funds from the CFA Coordinator staff line (resulting in a total of \$88,288 for the staff salary line) to the wildlife surveys travel line. June 30th 2020 was the final day for the CFA coordinator to draw funds from this grant which left a small amount remaining. Travel for remaining surveys could easily use up this minor difference.

All items are underlined as requested in the attached budget and I discussed this amendment in a phone call with Corrie Layfield on the afternoon of September 1, 2020. Should you have any questions or need further clarification please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Amendment Approved by LCCMR 9/9/2020.

Fourth Update Due: September 1, 2020:

The Conservation Focus Area Project has been a real achievement for the Nongame Wildlife Program in implementing some of the important habitat management and monitoring goals laid out in the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The CFA program was a new concept outlined in the 2015 revision of the SWAP, with partnership building and collaboration at its core. Through this grant we have been able to assist in implementing a total of 7 distinct habitat projects in 4 CFAs resulting in 110 acres of improved habitat for Species in Greatest Conservation need. Because most of the habitat work was already contracted and scheduled for the spring of 2020, it was not heavily impacted by pandemic related staffing limitations. Only one contract encumbered for a prescribed burning crew has yet to be implemented. We are very grateful to have been awarded an extension on this award in order to execute that contract as intended over the coming year.

Along with the habitat improvements we have also made a concerted effort to monitor the species response to of our habitat management efforts. As previously reported we started a BACI monitoring project focused on prairie enhancement efforts in three of our CFAs. The CFA monitoring work has been hampered by field work and contracting limitations which are reflected in the proceeding amendment. That said, we have made the necessary changes to how we conduct our field work in order to insure staff health and wellbeing and are confident we can complete the BACI surveys going forward due to the extension.

The challenges of this past field season were complemented by silver linings. With the amendment granted on this award in March of 2020, we were able to secure field equipment to implement a pilot research project

investigating the decline of American Kestrel populations in MN and potentially the greater Midwest as the project expands. The equipment purchase for the pilot is captured in this report, the field work portion of the pilot is included in “phase 2” of our Accelerating the Nongame Wildlife Program status update (Submitted on 1 Sept 2020).

Fifth Update Due: March 1, 2021:

The CFA portion of this work continues in Phase 2 of our “Accelerating the Nongame Wildlife Program”, as we are completing the initial goals identified in this grant. Staff were able to successfully complete the BACI monitoring season in fall of 2020, focused on pollinator surveys in areas currently undergoing prairie restoration management in the Prairie Coteau CFA. The bulk of the remaining funds left in this grant are in the process of being spent for prairie bluff habitat management actions, such as prescribed burns and brush clearing, in the Whitewater and Root River CFAs. These actions will take place as soon as weather permits this spring and early summer.

Amendment Request: 1 Sept 2021 (retroactive)

We would like to request a retroactive line item amendment to make minor line item adjustments to reconcile the budget. This request does not change the overall amount. We request that \$20 in unspent funds on the personnel line be moved to the Equipment/Tools/Supplies line. Similarly, we request that \$157 in unspent travel funds also be moved to the Equipment/Tools/Supplies line. In total \$177 will be added to the Equipment/Tools/Supplies line.

Kristin Hall discussed this issue with Corrie Layfield on August 30, 2021 and the recommendation was to submit a retroactive amendment request along with the final report, in order to reflect accurate expenses. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Amendment approved by LCCMR 10/8/2021

Final Update June 30, 2021- Submitted 1 September 2021:

All aspects of this grant were successful with only a few delays based on weather issues and unexpected complications during the 2020 pandemic. Four Conservation Focus Areas (CFA) were successfully activated, with on-the-ground habitat conservation efforts implemented in each. Species monitoring was conducted in two of the CFAs to document response to management efforts. We were also able to conduct a pilot study for a new kestrel research project which resulted in a full scale project proposal which was awarded in spring of 2021.

Abstract:

Results of this project can be broken down into three separate categories: habitat work, monitoring efforts and research. We surpassed our goals for the habitat restoration piece of this grant mainly due to the partnership aspect of Conservation Focus Areas. We were able to provide partial funding that leveraged broader participation in conservation actions. In total, this project enabled us to:

- plant 765 sapling trees in bottloland forest habitat to help with reforestation efforts,
- plant 6,000 oak saplings in oak savanna habitat on 17 acres at Meadow Brook WMA,
- conduct prairie forb inter-seed plantings on 45 acres of prairie grassland at three different locations,
- contribute to 102 acres of prescribed fire management to reduce succession and overgrowth of woody vegetation in grasslands,
- restore a sandy shoreline for turtle nesting habitat.

All activities took place in at least one of the four activated CFAs (see map: *Conservation Focus Areas (CFA) Status 2015-205 MN Wildlife Action Plan*).

An important component of conducting habitat improvement work is monitoring the species response to management. These efforts were focused primarily on prairie habitat restoration activities in the southwest and southeast portion of the state. Both flora and fauna response has been measured prior to the restoration activity,

during the establishment of the restoration and post management. These data will provide managers with information on ways to potentially adapt their management practices to better accommodate the species the habitat restoration is meant to benefit.

Research and monitoring are a top priority for the Nongame Wildlife Program, which uses status and trend data to determine the protection status of many nongame species. This grant helped us to conduct a pilot study for a new research project to better understand the recent declines of American kestrels. The pilot efforts resulted in a full scale project proposal for a federal grant which was awarded in spring of 2021.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Conservation Focus Areas are one of the main implementation tools in our State Wildlife Action Plan and we celebrate the work being done throughout the CFA network in many of our communications. Our Nongame Wildlife Program [facebook page](#) has featured some of the CFA habitat projects as well as the kestrel research. We have also created a 34 page, [Wildlife Action Plan 5-year Report](#), featuring highlights on how the plan is funded and the work we do. This report will be available to the public as well as our supporters to provide a fun “behind the scenes” look at how our program operates.

III. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:

ACTIVITY 1:

Description: Implement conservation actions for two regionally–based Conservation Focus Areas. This includes the development and implementation of habitat management objectives and effectiveness measures. This will be done in collaboration with DNR wildlife managers and external conservation partners.

ENRTF BUDGET:

\$ 220,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Establish partnerships to identify management goals and effectiveness measures for at least one Conservation Focus Area.	2020
2. Initiate collection of baseline data to be used for effectiveness monitoring on approximately 3 sites across 1-2 Conservation Focus Areas.	2020
3. Initiate habitat management actions to increase biodiversity for Species in Greatest Conservation Need on at least 40 acres of permanently protected lands in 1-2 Conservation Focus Areas.	2020

First Update March 1, 2019

The Prairie Coteau CFA in the southwestern corner of the state was the first CFA to be established with a partnership of over 20 different organizations and approximately 30 active members, including staff from state and federal agencies, NGOs and local governmental units. Working with the partnership and area experts over a series of meetings, we drafted the S.M.A.R.T. objectives constituting the work plan for the Prairie Coteau CFA. This plan includes 17 specific and measurable objectives focused on 4 distinct habitat types; grassland, native prairie, prairie streams and habitat corridors. The partnership is currently establishing a monitoring framework set to begin in spring/summer of 2019.

The Root River and Whitewater CFAs, located in southeastern MN are the second and third CFAs to be activated. These areas boarder one another but are distinct CFAs with differing habitat and SGCN priorities. However, these neighboring areas rely on many of the same conservation partners in the region, therefore initial planning

meetings have occurred jointly. The partnership includes 13 organizations and 35 members. We have had two initial meetings to document conservation actions to date and are planning a meeting this spring to initiate the S.M.A.R.T. objective process.

In addition to activating these three CFAs, the state Wildlife Action Plan identifies a variety of other implementation actions, which includes refining and adding to the Wildlife Action Network and Conservation Focus Areas as new data and opportunities become available. Therefore, a 37th CFA has been identified, focused on the Brainerd Lakes Area, and is being prioritized for activation in the coming year. Much of this work was started through an existing partnership, the North Central Conservation Roundtable. This partnership has identified the draft boundary of this new CFA and we are beginning the process developing area objectives.

Second Update September 1, 2019

In Late March/ early April we used CFA funding to enhance a 21-acre pollinator planting within the Whitewater Valley CFA. Our portion of the project was specifically aimed at adding prairie violets to the prairie enhancement effort. Prairie violets are an early spring forb and the essential host plant for the regal fritillary butterfly, a documented species of special concern (SPC).

The summer was spent implementing some of the S.M.A.R.T objectives outlined for the Prairie Coteau, Whitewater Valley and Root River CFAs. Specifically, we conducted the initial monitoring season for two initiatives. The first project was the pilot season to test protocol and examine the ability to add pollinators to existing long-term monitoring sites where plants and birds have been regularly documented over at least the past ten years. Five sites in the Prairie Coteau CFA (Prairie Coteau SNA, Blue Mounds State Park, Altona WMA, Carney Native Prairie Bank, and Hole-in-the-Mountain) and 2 sites in the Whitewater Valley and Root River CFAs (Kellogg Weaver Dunes SNA and Mound Prairie SNA respectively) have been surveyed 3 times for butterflies and 4 times for bees, with one more site visit scheduled for September.

Butterfly surveys at each site consist of walking four-100 m transects at a slow pace, counting and recording all the butterflies within 5 meters of the observer. Butterfly surveys found notable populations of Dusted skipper and Leonard's skipper (SPC), at both Weaver Dunes and Mound Prairie. Both skipper species are rare and declining butterflies in Minnesota. Populations of regal fritillary (SPC) were noted at all sites except Mound Prairie. Bee surveys involve catching all bees visiting flowers within a 50 x 50 meter plot for 1 hour. To date, over 400 bee specimens have been caught and all bees will be identified in the lab over the winter months. Adding pollinators to these long standing sites will provide a more comprehensive, foundational data set for future ecosystem management actions.

We also initiated a Before and After Control Impact (BACI) response monitoring project using non-game funds in addition to this grant. This monitoring initiative is a direct result of defining specific CFA objectives. This season was the initial "before management" monitoring effort documenting plant presence and bird use at low- quality grassland sites which are scheduled to be managed over the next 2-5-year timeframe. The intent of this work is to get a before and after management comparison to document species response within a relatively short timeframe. Response monitoring results will then be used to help inform ongoing management practices.

Third Update March 1, 2020

In continuing to work towards the habitat management goals of this grant we purchased trees for a 6-acre restoration project located at Rush Creek WMA within the Root River CFA. We have also initiated contracts and purchase orders for an additional 83 acres of habitat enhancement work in the Brainerd Lakes CFA, Whitewater CFA and Root River CFA. The projected timeline for these activities is in spring 2020. Details of each project will be included in the final status update of this grant (Sept. 2020).

Monitoring work has continued as well, with funds from this grant applied towards a plant monitoring contract at our BACI (see 2nd update) sites in the Prairie Coteau which was completed in October 2019. The pollinator monitoring- bee processing period is now complete, with the total bee abundance similar to butterflies (n=506). Bee species identification results are preliminary but can be grouped according to morpho-species. The most abundant groups were the Tiny Bees and Green Sweat Bees. In contrast with butterflies, Mound Prairie had the greatest abundance of bees and the lowest abundance of butterflies of all the sites. These preliminary trends are in accordance with other studies showing negative correlations between bee and butterfly diversity.

Fourth Update September 1, 2020:

This status update is mostly focused on implementing the habitat management portion of this project. With funding from this grant we were able to work with partners to contribute to 3 tree planting projects, one turtle habitat creation project, 2 prairie forb enhancement projects and support prescribed fire and brush management efforts. All projects, except the contributions to the habitat management crew, have been successfully implemented within 3 different CFAs. The ability to work with partners and provide support to specific species and habitat management goals has been an invaluable. While the State Wildlife Action Plan is an important document in guiding habitat management and species protection, the CFA concept; implementing the coordination and planning of tangible goals, plus providing funding and technical expertise was essential in helping to make those goals a reality.

The monitoring activities associated with the CFA program were the first to advance under this grant and will continue to be an integral part of our CFA work going forward. Response monitoring typically has a time lag between the conservation management action and the species response. That known lag, coupled with the unforeseen limitations to field work this past season have been a challenge but we are confident we can expend our remaining funds on these efforts in the coming year.

Our final update includes a new aspect of this grant. With the amendment approved on this award in March of 2020, we were able to secure field equipment to implement a pilot research project investigating the decline of American kestrel populations in MN and potentially the greater Midwest as the project expands. The equipment purchase for the pilot included 10 animal movement transmitters, all the necessary pieces required to build a dual Motus antennae tower, a handheld receiver and a Sensorstation receiver (for the tower). Most of the transmitters were successfully deployed this season and we are in the process of putting the tower up and getting it registered on the Motus network.

Once the tower is in place it can receive transmissions from any animal wearing a tracking device. These transmitters are intended for use on small species including birds, insects and bats. While our research project is focused on kestrels and how they use their habitat during the full annual cycle, the infrastructure of the Motus tower is open access and allows fellow researchers to locate their target species as well. This network is well established in the eastern portion of the US and in Canada. LCCMR has funded Motus work being conducted by NRRRI at U of M Duluth, which was the first project to begin building the network in MN. The more towers available the more location information researchers can gather – this is an exciting advancement in the conservation of many SGCN species.

Fifth Update March 1, 2021:

Monitoring efforts: The Before-After-Control-Impact monitoring efforts were conducted in the late summer and fall of 2020 for bumblebee and butterfly species. Monitoring was conducted with safety protocols in place and is an essential piece of the comprehensive response information we can include with the plant and avian surveys conducted at these locations in 2018 and 2019.

Research efforts: In September of 2020 we installed and registered our first Motus tower in partnership with the Arden Hills Army Training Site. The Motus network is an essential aspect of the American Kestrel research project identified within the State Wildlife Action Plan. This grant enabled us to conduct a successful pilot program in 2020 and we have since secured additional (federal) funds to expand this effort into a full scale project. We have approximately \$2,000 in supply funds remaining for this effort and are in the process of ordering 10 additional transmitters to be deployed this spring on adult kestrels.

Habitat efforts: The remaining funds for this grant are in contract, specifically to support a mobile field crew conducting habitat enhancement work in the southeast region of the state. The crew has been hired and are prepared to conduct this work as weather allows. A summary of these efforts will be included in our final report.

Final Update June 30, 2021:

Monitoring efforts: Twelve sites were monitored (with a total of 39 bee plots and 39 butterfly transects) during the 2021 field season in a continuation of the avian, pollinator and vegetation response monitoring efforts with respect to prairie restoration efforts.

Research efforts: With a combination of these funds and our newly secured federal funds we purchased and successfully deployed 24 additional transmitters on American kestrels at the Arden Hills Army Training Site, Carpenter Nature Center and Sax Zim Bog.

Habitat: Contract work consisted primarily of prescribed burning and tree/brush removal work within the Whitewater and Root River Conservation Focus Areas to create grassland and savanna openings. Seven burns totaling 102 acres were completed in Choice Wildlife Management Area, McCarthy Lake Wildlife Management Area, and Rush Creek Woods Wildlife Management Area.

IV. DISSEMINATION: The results of this project will be disseminated through DNR news releases, Nongame Wildlife Program Facebook posts, at professional society meetings of natural resources agencies and environmental educators, through collaboration with the media, and by providing regular updates to LCCMR staff and commission members.

Description: DNR news releases, Nongame Wildlife Program Facebook posts, at professional society meetings of natural resources agencies and environmental educators, through collaboration with the media, and by providing regular updates to LCCMR staff and commission members will be used to provide the public with information on the status of these efforts.

First Update March 1, 2019

Project outreach efforts have taken place at each of the partnership meetings described under “ACTIVITY 1” as well as in the form of professional presentations at two statewide conferences. The first presentation was *Birds of the MN Wildlife Action Plan* given on December 2nd 2018 at the MN Ornithological Union paper session conference, attended by approximately 300 people. The second presentation was at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the MN Chapters of the Wildlife Society and the Society of American Foresters held in Duluth on February 19-21st. The theme of the conference was “Fostering Partnerships in Conservation”. With Conservation Focus Areas centered on partnerships, it was a perfect fit. The title of the talk was *Partner Based Implementation Minnesota’s Wildlife Action Plan* and the topic was well received by conference attendees.

Second Update September 1, 2019

Over the summer months Conservation Focus Area (CFA) partnership meetings were not prioritized as many participants were engaged in their field management or monitoring seasons. Since the last status update, three informational presentations have been given with the Anoka Sandplains Working Group (March 27th), the Minnesota Forest habitat Collaborative (July 27th) and CFAs were featured as an interdivisional “Wildlife Engagement Monday” topic with our regional Fish and Wildlife Staff (August 26th). The intent of the presentations was to share an overview of the CFA activation process, highlight overall goals of the statewide Wildlife Action Plan and to discuss opportunities for future collaborations.

In addition to these outreach efforts, both the Wildlife Diversity program supervisor and Conservation Focus Area coordinator participated in the ENTRF strategic planning- expert panel brainstorming session on August 9th to provide guidance and content related to how the State Wildlife Action Plan can be integrated into their overall goals for the next 6-year plan.

Third Update March 1, 2020

CFA partnership meetings resumed in fall of 2019. The Prairie Coteau partnership meeting took place November and the Whitewater and Root River CFA partnership meeting was in December. Recent outreach efforts have centered on the newest CFA to be activated, Brainerd Lakes, where we have presented to both external partners and the public. A landscape level habitat planning presentation was given to private landowners involved with the Aitkin County Woodlands Committee on December 7th and our CFA partnership meeting is scheduled to take place on April 8, 2020.

Broader outreach has continued with State Wildlife Action Plan and CFA overview presentations to our regional wildlife habitat managers (September 10th and December 12th 2019). These presentations have resulted in multiple actions working towards the habitat management goals of this grant. We also presented to the MN DOT (January 14, 2020) and will continue to collaborate with them in areas where our objectives overlap.

Fourth Update September 1, 2020:

In light of Covid 19, no CFA partnership meetings have taken place since the last report due to the Stay at Home and Stay Safe MN executive orders to facilitate social distancing. Partners have remained in contact on virtual platforms or via e mails in order to share updates and discuss ongoing efforts. Fortunately, we have not lost much time and can reconvene the broader based CFA partnership meetings virtually this fall.

Fifth Update March 1, 2021:

Meetings have been able to continue using a virtual platform and each CFA had a partnership meeting in fall of 2020. Continued communications with participating partners are also taking place via e mail or phone conversations. The Nongame Wildlife Program is currently working on a 5-year report spotlighting successes within the program, specific to the State Wildlife Action Plan. This report will be available on our website and as printed media. The CFA work is an important feature of this report.

Final Update June 30, 2021:

The American kestrel tracking and motus project has been featured on the [Midwest Migratory Network](#) page as well as [Cellular Tracking Technologies facebook page](#).

Virtual meetings continued in spring of 2021 with two of the four CFAs with a concerted effort on connections with private land owners. The five-year report is currently with Creative Services getting the final edits prior to completion. This report will showcase a lot of the work done within the Nongame Program over the past five years, highlighting the significant contributions from both the federally administered State Wildlife Grant program as well as the matching state level funding sources which include the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF).

Project Results Use and Dissemination:

Conservation Focus Areas are one of the main implementation tools in our State Wildlife Action Plan and we celebrate the work being done throughout the CFA network in many of our communications. Our Nongame Wildlife Program [facebook page](#) has featured some of the CFA habitat projects as well as the kestrel research. We have also created a 34 page, [Wildlife Action Plan 5-year Report](#), featuring highlights on how the plan is funded and the work we do. This report will be available to the public as well as our supporters to provide a fun “behind the scenes” look at how our program operates.

V. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:

A. Preliminary ENRTF Budget Overview:

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Personnel	\$116,124
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts	\$79,625
Equipment/Tools/Supplies-avian telemetry supplies: Motus tracking towers, receivers, nano-tags, CCT tags	\$9,000
Capital Expenditures Over \$5,000	\$ N/A
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements)	\$ N/A
Professional Services for Acquisition	\$ N/A
Printing	\$ N/A
Travel	\$ 5,265
Additional Budget Items: Direct and Necessary DNR charges	\$ 9,986
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 220,000

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$5,000:

Explanation of Use of Classified Staff: N/A

Total Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Directly Funded with this ENRTF Appropriation: .5/yr FTEs

Enter Total Estimated Personnel Hours: 1040	Divide by 2,080 = TOTAL FTE: .5
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Total Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Estimated to Be Funded through Contracts with this ENRTF Appropriation: N/A

Enter Total Estimated Personnel Hours:	Divide by 2,080 = TOTAL FTE:
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B. Other Funds:

SOURCE OF AND USE OF OTHER FUNDS	Amount Proposed	Amount Spent	Status and Timeframe
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: <i>Federal State Wildlife Grants</i>			
	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	2 years. FY 19 & 20
Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: <i>State nongame program funds as well as partnership time and technical expertise</i>			
In-kind	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	2 years. FY 19 & 20

Past and Current ENRTF Appropriation: N/A			
	\$	\$	
Other Funding History: N/A			
	\$	\$	

VI. PROJECT PARTNERS:

Project partners will include the DNR Divisions Ecological and Water Resources, Fish and Wildlife, Parks and Trails, Lands and Minerals, Forestry and external conservation organizations actively conducting habitat work in the Conservation Focus Areas, the University of Minnesota, and communities in Minnesota associated with recreational opportunities.

A. Partners receiving ENRTF funding

Name	Title	Affiliation	Role

B. Partners NOT receiving ENRTF funding

Name	Title	Affiliation	Role

VII. LONG-TERM- IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING: This effort will enable the Nongame Wildlife Program to better address the conservation, education, and recreational needs of Minnesota’s nongame wildlife species and their habitats. This two-year project is the first of a potential longer term matching effort and partnership that will benefit Minnesota wildlife by a collaborative conservation effort in which ENRTF supplements the voluntary Nongame Wildlife Checkoff donations by Minnesota citizens to the Nongame Wildlife Fund. This would promote conservation accomplishments of the ENRTF and increase the long term effectiveness of the Nongame Wildlife Program for wildlife conservation in Minnesota.

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

- The project is for 2 years, will begin on 7/1/2018, and end on 6/30/2021.
- Periodic project status update reports will be submitted March 1 and September 1 of each year.
- A final report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and September 1, 2021.

IX. SEE ADDITIONAL WORK PLAN COMPONENTS:

- A. Budget Spreadsheet**
- B. Visual Component or Map**

Attachment A:
 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
 M.L. 2018 Budget Spreadsheet

Project Title: Nongame Wildlife Program Acceleration

Legal Citation: M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 02, Subd. 08a

Project Manager: Kristin A. L. Hall

Organization: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

College/Department/Division: Division of Ecological and Water Resources

M.L. 2018 ENRTF Appropriation: M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 02, Subd. 08a

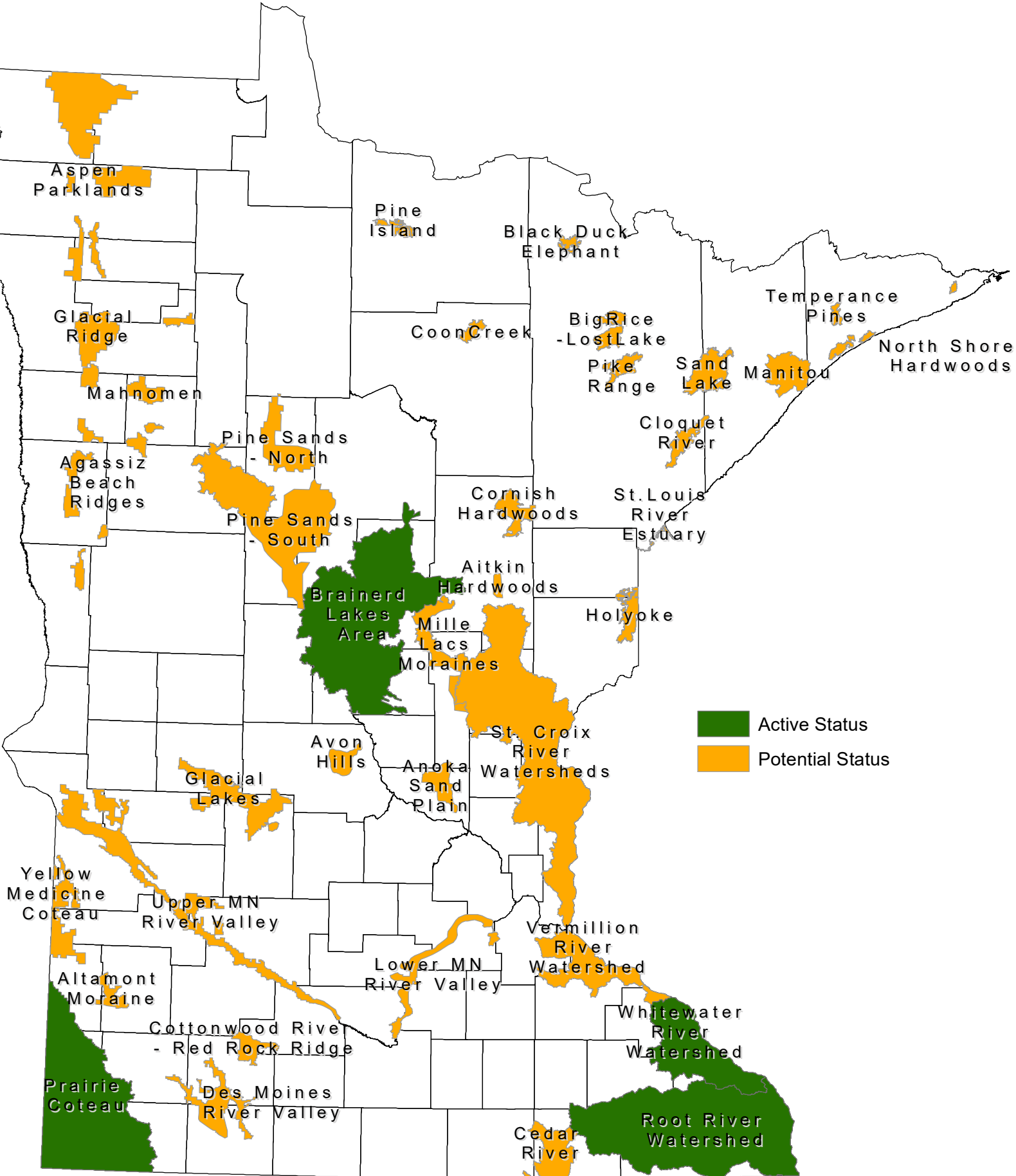
Project Length and Completion Date: June 30, 2021

Date of Report: 1 September 2021



ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET	Revised Budget	Amount Spent	Activity 1 Balance
	9/1/2021		
BUDGET ITEM			
Personnel (Wages and Benefits)			
CFA coordinator: .5 FTE: \$90,000 (\$35,000 sal; \$10,000 benefits) - 2 years	88,288	88,288	\$0
Surveyors: two .3 FTEs (\$42,000 sal; \$10,500 benefits, per 2 staff per year) 2 years	27,816	27,816	\$0
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts			\$0
RFP for baseline data collection on CFAs-2 yrs	3,611	3,611	\$0
Contracts for habitat management:	76,014	76,014	\$0
Equipment/Tools/Supplies			\$0
Wildlife survey supplies - avian telemetry: motus omni-directional tracking towers (3,500), nano-tags (20@200 = 4,000), 5 CTT tags (1,500)	9,177	\$9,177	\$0
Travel expenses in Minnesota			\$0
Wildlife surveys-travel	5,108	5,108	\$0
Other			\$0
Direct and necessary costs cover HR Support (~\$1,484), Safety Support (~\$341), Financial Support (~\$2,744), Communication Support (~\$1,271), IT Support (~\$3,074), and Planning Support (~\$1,072), necessary to accomplish funded programs/projects (Total \$9,986)	9,986	\$9,986	\$0
COLUMN TOTAL	220,000	\$220,000	\$0

Conservation Focus Area (CFA) Status 2015-2025 MN Wildlife Action Plan



Conservation focus areas (CFAs) are places with the need for and/or the opportunity to focus conservation activities with multiple partners to improve habitat for and populations of Species in Greatest Conservation Need. They do not necessarily represent areas of highest ecological value. As part of the MNWAP, at least six CFAs will be selected for implementation from 2015 to 2025.