



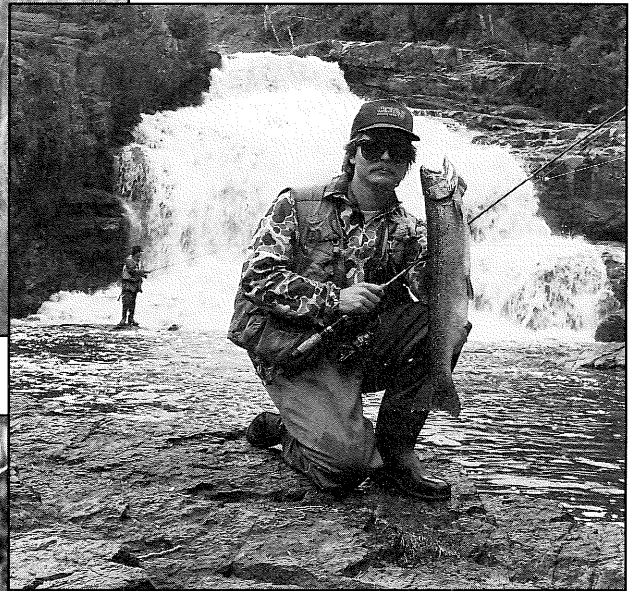
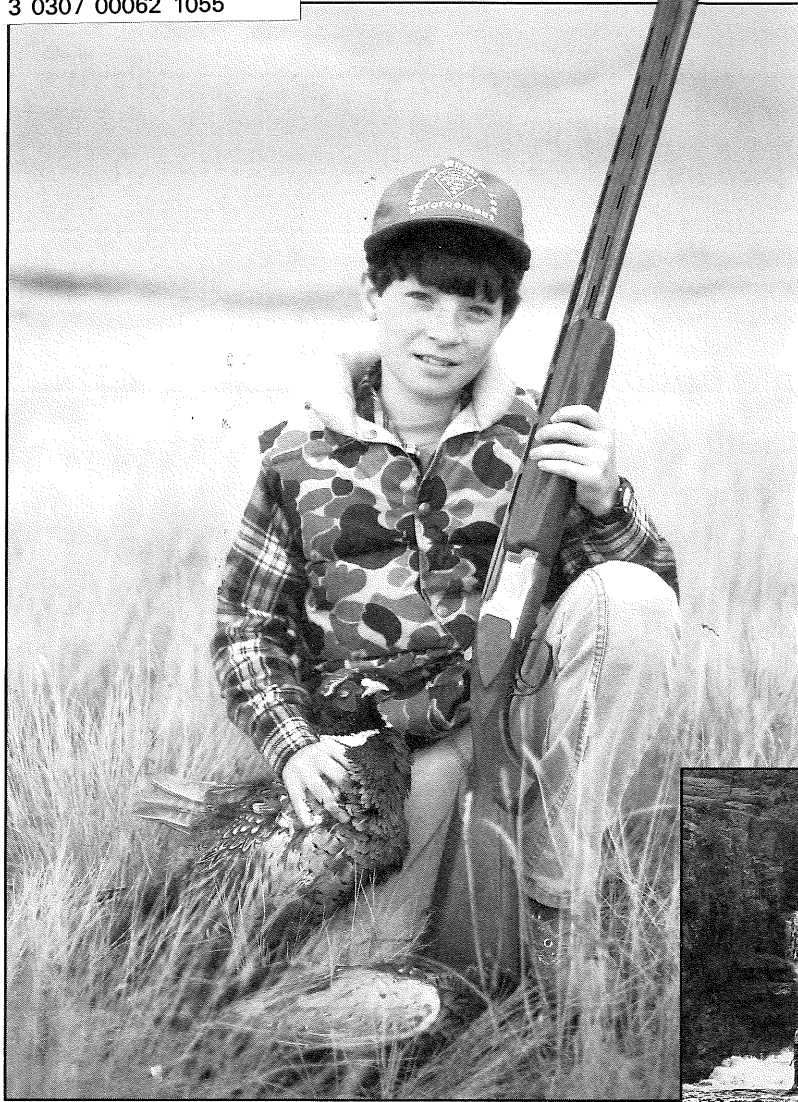
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# Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)

## Legislative Report

January, 1989



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# *RIM: an Introduction*

*Reinvesting in Minnesota's one billion dollar fish and wildlife-based recreation industry.*



*Thirty years ago, Minnesota was a pheasant hunter's dream. Then habitat was plowed under, the birds disappeared, and hunters went elsewhere.*

**REINVEST** IN Minnesota's natural resources. That was the recommendation of the Citizen's Commission to Promote Hunting and Fishing in Minnesota, established by Governor Perpich in July, 1984. The commission found that the state's fish and wildlife resources — on which fishing, hunting and other wildlife-oriented recreation depends — could not withstand any additional recreational pressure. Because of a reduction in wildlife habitat and the deterioration of water quality, the commission concluded that Minnesota's fish and wildlife-based recreation could not improve unless additional habitat was provided to support fish and wildlife populations.

The commission's report pointed to the immediate need to revitalize forest, farmland and aquatic habitat and protect the state's soil and water resources. The report concluded that if Minnesota is to continue receiving the estimated one billion dollars that hunting and fishing contribute to the state's economy, more must be done to maintain and improve the state's fish and wildlife resources and increase outdoor recreation

opportunities. The result, said the commission's members, will be a revitalized natural environment and a healthier state economy—particularly in rural areas, where most outdoor recreation takes place.

A coalition of sports, environmental and agricultural organizations immediately supported the commission's recommendations. This coalition worked closely with Governor Perpich, the Minnesota Legislature and state agencies to create the RIM program, which began in 1986.

RIM is Minnesota's response to the state's fish, wildlife, soil and water resources. It includes RIM Reserve (made up of Marginal Ag Land, Wetlands Restoration and Living Snowfence), Critical Habitat Private Sector Match, Wildlife Enhancement, Fisheries Enhancement, and Prairie Bank.

This report summarizes the accomplishments of the RIM program administered jointly by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Natural Resources in 1988. It also summarizes the expected accomplishments during the remainder of the 1988/89 biennium. ■

# RIM RESERVE

THREE PROGRAMS make up RIM Reserve: Marginal Ag Lands, Wetlands Restoration and Living Snowfence. They are designed to help restore Minnesota's natural resources through erosion and sediment control, wildlife habitat restoration and water quality improvement. The RIM Reserve Program is the only one of its kind in the nation. It unites farmers, sportsmen and other conservationists in preserving Minnesota's natural heritage for future generations.

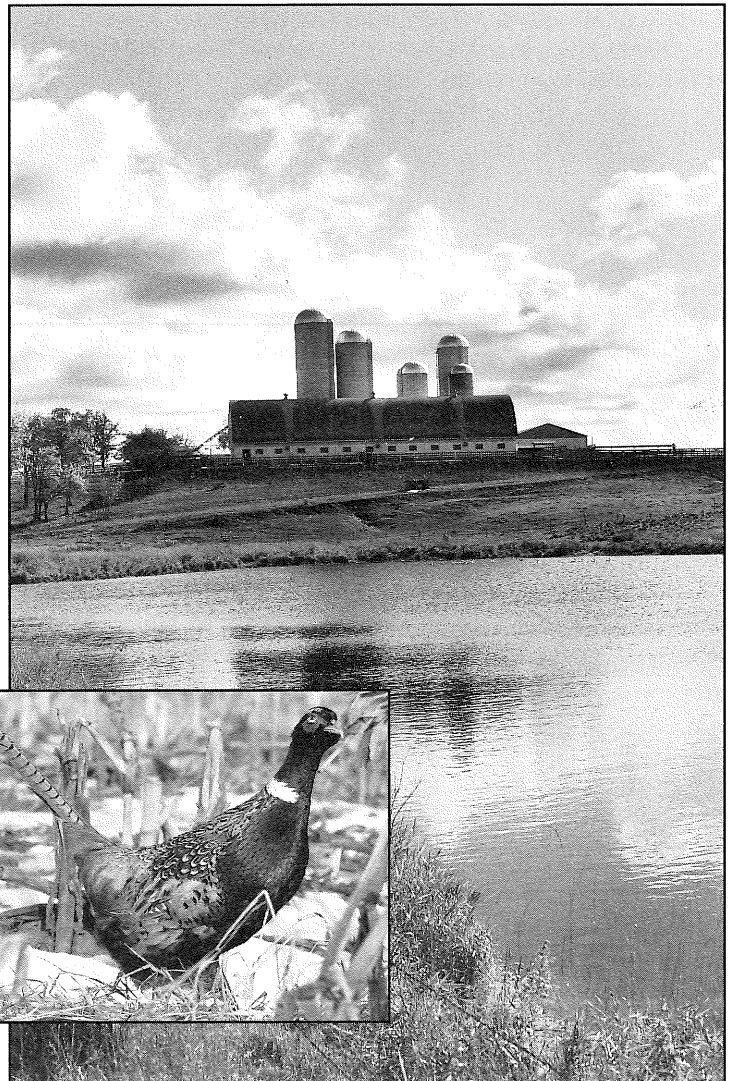
## Marginal Ag Lands

ALMOST 2.5 MILLION acres of Minnesota farmland are subject to high erosion rates. To control erosion and improve water quality, the RIM Reserve Marginal Ag Lands Program pays farmers to take this land out of production and convert it to wildlife habitat.

RIM Marginal Ag Lands complements the Federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) by offering land-owners 20-year or permanent easements. Payment is based on local cash rental rates.

Permanent vegetative cover must be established on the enrolled land. Approximately 24,000 acres have been enrolled in the RIM Reserve Marginal Ag Lands Program, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture estimates that an additional 800,000 to 1 million acres are eligible.

By protecting precious topsoil from erosion, RIM Reserve enhances Minnesota's agricultural industry and creates wildlife habitat, benefiting both farmers and sportsmen. ■



*When cropland is planted back to its natural state, wildlife such as pheasants have more places to live.*

# Wetlands Restoration

Before European settlers reached Minnesota, there were about 13 million acres of wetlands here. Over the past 200 years, 9 million acres — 75 percent — have been drained. In many parts of the state, 95 percent of the wetlands are gone, drained mostly during the 1960s and early '70s.

The innovative RIM Reserve Wetlands Restoration Program now pays landowners to restore their previously drained wetlands. It offers them perpetual easements, reimburses the cost of cover seedings and helps pay for any structures needed to restore marshes, swamps and shallow lakes. Wildlife groups also help fund wetlands restoration.

A unique and exciting program, RIM Reserve Wetlands Restoration benefits farmers by paying them to retire land that in rainy years may be too wet to farm and by letting them focus their management efforts on better land.

To date we have received applications to restore approximately 750 acres.

The Wetlands Restoration program benefits sportsmen by creating wetland habitat, increasing wildlife numbers, and improving hunting opportunities. Wetlands Restoration benefits all Minnesotans by helping control sedimentation and erosion, reducing flood damage, and improving water quality. ■



*As more wetlands are restored, duck numbers in Minnesota will increase, and waterfowl hunting should improve.*



# *Living Snowfence*

**W**IND EROSION is a serious problem in areas of the state that have no natural forest cover. The third RIM Reserve program, Living Snowfence, encourages landowners to plant windbreaks along highway right-of-ways to decrease snowdrift, lessen wind erosion, and provide valuable wildlife habitat.

The windbreak must be within 300 feet of a state or county highway right-of-ways and have a minimum of six rows of trees and shrubs. RIM Reserve pays for per-

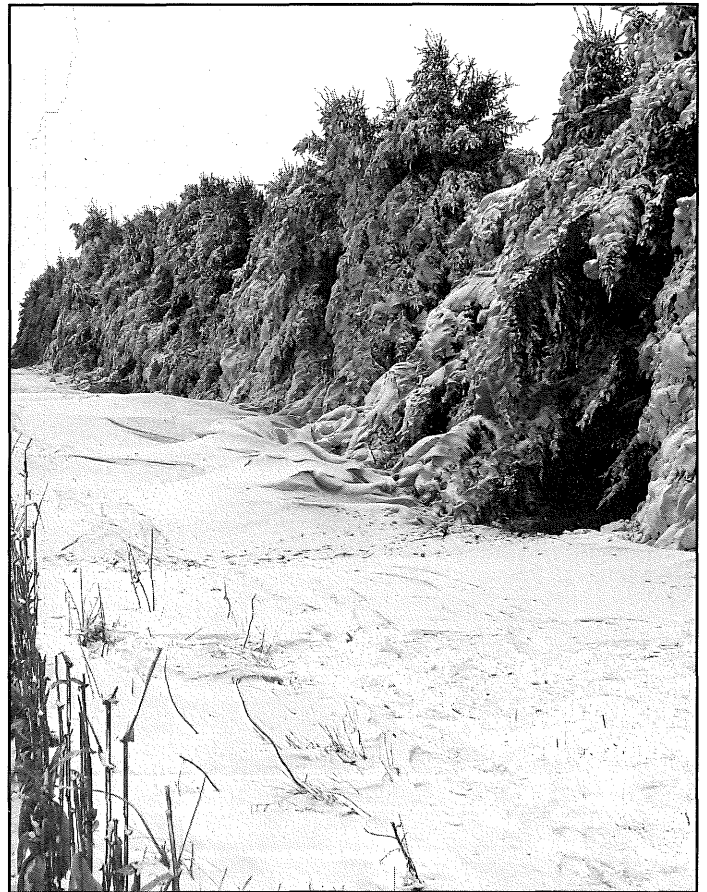
petual easements and pays landowners up to \$300 an acre for planting trees and shrubs.

A living snowfence provides winter roosting habitat for pheasants, nesting habitat for songbirds, and travel lanes for deer and other wildlife.

In addition, it cuts winter highway maintenance costs and improves safety by reducing drifting snow, and it lessens the effect of wind erosion on valuable topsoil. ■

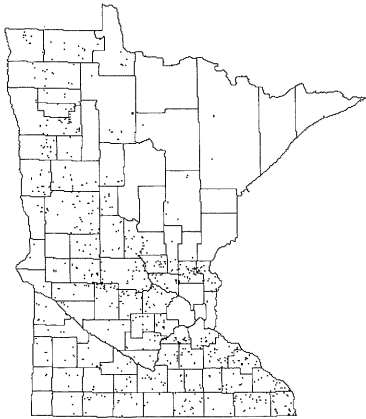


*Deer and other wildlife need shelter with nearby food to survive a bad winter.*



# Accomplishments

Distribution of Rim Reserve Acres  
(12/88)



This map shows all sections containing any RIM Reserve land.

*(Prepared by the Land Management Information Center, State Planning Agency)*

IN 1986, we received over 2,000 applications to enroll nearly 60,000 acres. Due to the limited amount of funding, only 813 easements were accepted, encompassing 18,618 acres. During the 1987 sign-up, we received and approved 218 applications for approximately 4,000 acres, including 35 wetland restoration applications encompassing 355 acres of restorable wetlands.

The August 1988 sign-up resulted in 158 applications for 3,435 acres, including 39 wetland restoration applications. The second 1988 sign-up began on December 12 and ended January 13, 1989. The 4,000 acres of enrollment expected from this sign-up will make use of all of the fiscal year 1989 funds.

In the Living Snowfence Program there were only six applications in the nine pilot SWCDs. Enrollment was low because the required six rows of trees and shrubs covered too much land and there weren't enough incentives for the landowners. The program may be adjusted during the 1989 legislative session.

RIM Reserve is administered locally by the 91 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). ■

## RIM Reserve Plan — F.Y. 1990

PRESERVING AND enhancing Minnesota's natural resources will continue to be the goal of the RIM Reserve Program

Perpetual easements will be emphasized in fiscal year 1990, as the program strives to create and preserve a variety of wildlife habitats.

RIM Reserve will continue to complement the Department of Natural Resources RIM programs, the federal Conservation Reserve Program and other conservation efforts. In addition, RIM Reserve will continue to work closely with private conservation groups to enhance fish and wildlife habitat, control soil erosion and sedimentation, and improve water quality.

Another late-summer sign-up is proposed.

Consistent with our goals, RIM Reserve plans to support Rural Finance Authority legislation.

RIM Reserve and SWCD staff will enhance and maintain communications with the many groups interested in the RIM Reserve program. As one of the most innovative conservation efforts in the nation, RIM Reserve will strive for consistent state policy to retire marginal agriculture land, restore drained wetlands, and establish living snowfences to improve Minnesota's environment. ■

FOR MORE  
INFO

If you'd like to know more about RIM Reserve, call your local Soil and Water Conservation District Office.

# Wildlife Enhancement

WILDLIFE IS a product of our land and water. To produce healthy wildlife populations we need to actively manage and protect areas where wild animals live.

The object of the RIM Wildlife Enhancement Program is to improve food and cover for wildlife on public land, increase wildlife populations, and provide additional opportunities for wildlife-related recreation.

Most of the projects within the Wildlife Enhancement Program are targeted toward Minnesota's northern forests and forest-grassland transition zones, which are prime areas for white-tailed deer, moose, sharp-tailed grouse, waterfowl and other game and nongame species. (The Section of Wildlife is also working closely with the Department of Agriculture to increase habitat through RIM Reserve). The 1988 projects in the Wildlife Enhancement Program cover over 50,000 acres of forest, brushland, wetland and prairie. RIM funding includes \$2.7 million in bonding and \$840,000 in general funds. Of that amount, \$480,000 is targeted for work on private lands.



## WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT

Project Type	A: Completed Projects (1/88—12/88)		B: Projects Initiated or Planned for Completion (1/89—12/89)	
	Number of Projects		Area Imporved (Acres)	
	A	B*	A	B*
Habitat Development				
Wetland	2	5	759	207
Grassland	38	16	40,694	31,942
Forest	29	46	5,380	29,284
Habitat Acquisition	9	18	3,270**	2,500
Private Lands Habitat	201	225	1,522	1,880
Rec. Development	4	20	—	—
Total:	274	330	51,625	65,813
*estimated	**Joint wildlife/fisheries			

In the northern forests, access trails are being built and forest openings, clearings and firebreaks are being cut. Forest management programs, which benefit deer and grouse populations by increasing habitat diversity, are nearly doubled by this RIM program.

In Minnesota's wetlands — vital breeding areas for waterfowl, furbearers and many songbirds — RIM funds are being used to build structures that will let wildlife managers control water levels, improving the growth of aquatic vegetation used by ducks as food and brood cover.

Another aspect of the Wildlife Enhancement Program is prescribed burning, which is an important tool for improving habitat used by sharp-tailed grouse and other grassland and brushland wildlife. Last year's dry and windy weather kept the DNR from doing as much prescribed burning as planned, but if weather conditions are favorable in 1989, prescribed burns will be an important aspect of the program.

In 1988, 274 projects were completed as part of the Wildlife Enhancement Program. The addition of four wildlife professionals in 1988 will help accelerate the completion of planned projects. ■

# Fisheries Enhancement

OVER TWO million anglers—including nearly one-half of all residents — fish Minnesota’s lakes, streams and rivers. And fishing here is expected to increase by 15% over the next 20 years — more than any other outdoor recreation activity.

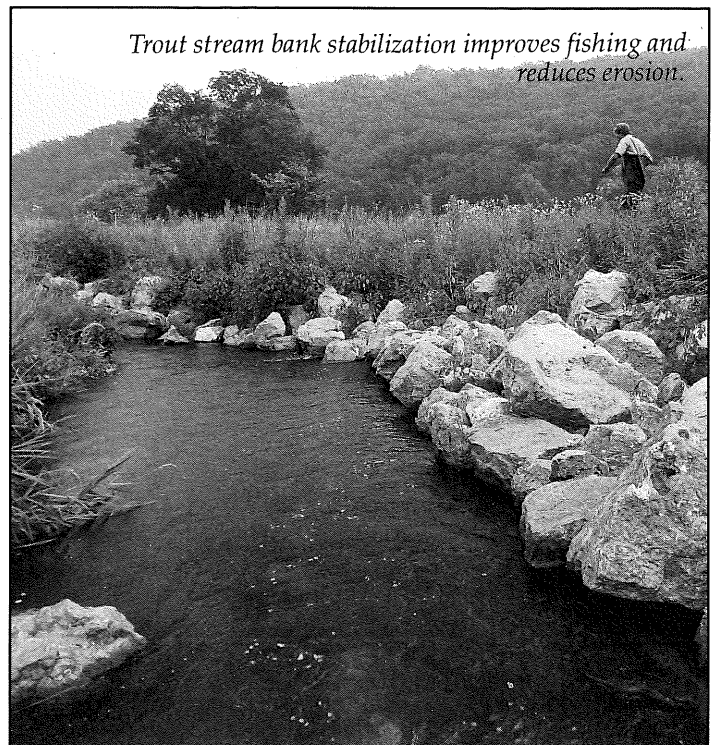
Minnesota’s waters currently meet the demand for quality fishing, but they must keep up with the increasing amount of angling pressure. To meet that need, the DNR must protect and improve fish habitat and game fish populations and provide more access to fishing waters. RIM funding has provided \$6.4 million in bonding and \$360,000 in general funds to help meet that need.

Fish habitat — places where fish live and breed — is being developed throughout the state as part of the Fisheries Enhancement Program. Walleye spawning areas were constructed this year at Lake Winnibigoshish, and a bid was awarded for the development of a spawning site at Carls Lake, in Scott County.

Among the other habitat development projects were the installation at ten lakes of aeration systems (which prevent winterkill and maintain permanent game fish populations on shallow waters) and improvements such as bank stabilization and cover on seven trout streams. In addition, rough-fish barriers, which keep undersirable fish such as carp out of game fish waters, were installed on three lakes.

Improvements at the St. Paul and Hinckley hatcheries will enhance the state’s ability to stock trout, salmon and warmwater species in Lake Superior and inland lakes and streams.

Plans are in place to complete habitat improvement projects on two streams and establish five additional aeration projects. The acquisition of public access will be completed on two streams. Additional improvements are planned for four of the state’s hatcheries. ■



## FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT

Project Type	Number of Projects		Area Improved	
	A	B*	A	B*
	A: Completed Projects (1/88—12/88) B: Projects Initiated or Planned for Completion (1/89—12/89)			
Habitat Improvement				
Streams/Rivers	7	2	16.5 miles	32 miles
Lakes	14	6	6,369 acres	5,187 acres
Recreational Access				
Streams/Rivers	1	2	1 mile	101 miles
Fish Production	2	4	Statewide	Statewide
Total:	24	14	16.5 miles	42 miles
*estimated			6,369 acres	5,187 acres



# Critical Habitat Private Matching

THIS UNIQUE RIM program encourages private citizens and organizations to contribute to the acquisition and development of critical fish and wildlife habitat by matching their contributions from a special fund. Donations may be in cash, land or interests in land, and the donors may request that their contributions be applied to specific critical habitat projects.

"Critical" habitat is specified in state law (84.944) based on its significance to fish, wildlife, natural ecological communities and related outdoor recreation. Donations that meet the basic criteria of critical habitat are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, as long as sufficient matching funds are available. When funds become limited, the DNR gives priority to projects that assist endangered and threatened species, natural ecological communities, other important fish and wildlife species, and outdoor recreation, in that order.

Land donations that meet the criteria become part of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system. Most land donations are designated as Wildlife Management Areas; others become parts of Scientific and Natural Areas, state forests, state parks or trout streams.

If private citizens wish to donate land that doesn't meet the criteria, the land may be sold by the DNR and proceeds will be deposited into the Critical Habitat Private Sector Matching fund.

RIM legislation has provided \$3.7 million in bonding to support this initiative. Since July, 1986, nearly 5,500 acres, valued at \$1.6 million, have been donated through this program. In addition, \$907,000 in cash has been donated and an additional \$122,000 has been pledged. Donations currently being appraised and reviewed by the DNR total \$700,000. ■



*The trumpeter swan is just one of the many wildlife species that can benefit from this private donations program.*

## CRITICAL HABITAT MATCHING

Donations to Critical Habitat (7/86—12/88)	
Donation Type	Value
Land	\$ 1,603,800
Cash	\$ 906,764
Pledges (Cash and land)	\$ 801,817
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 3,312,381</b>

Project Type	A: Complete Projects (1/88—12/88)		B: Projects Initiated or Planned for Completion (1/89—12/89)	
	Number of Projects		Area Improved (acres)	
	A	B*	A	B*
Land Donations	12	10	1,527	1,500
Land Purchases	18	23	1,801	3,000
Habitat Development	188	154	9,770	10,000
* estimated				

# Aspen Recycling

**F**OREST, BRUSH, AND PRAIRIE ecosystems need to be managed so that they have the right mixture of trees, shrubs and plants that wildlife need. For example, when aspen forests are managed to create a mixture of tree age classes, conditions for an increase in ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer, and moose populations are ideal. But without proper management or natural disturbances that simulate harvesting (such as fire), natural aspen forest ecosystems become over-mature. When this happens, they slowly die and are replaced by different ecosystems, which are often poor habitat for the targeted wildlife species.

In addition to helping wildlife populations, aspen management and "prescribed" fire can also provide the resource base needed to ensure future wood supplies for Minnesota's forest products industries and prevent excessive fuel accumulations which can cause dangerous fires.

The 1986 Legislature appropriated \$1 million for the RIM Aspen Recycling Program ("recycling," because aspen, through harvesting, is a renewable tree species). Through this program, local contractors (often loggers) are paid to harvest mature aspen on state land.

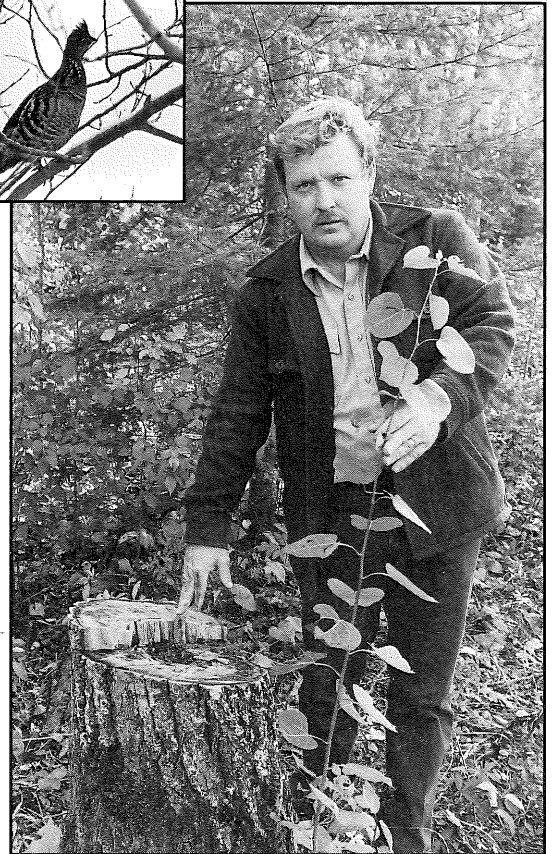
The first year about 4,000 acres of aspen were harvested, or recycled. In 1987, the Legislature appropriated \$900,000 to continue the program and also allowed tree funds to be used for wildlife habitat improvement projects other than aspen recycling. Last fiscal year over 5,000 acres of aspen were recycled. The funding was also used to prescribe burn over 9,700 acres.

Prescribed fire is a careful way to reintroduce fire into Minnesota's ecosystems. The prescribed fire program is still far from complete. The program needs funds to purchase additional equipment and hire temporary personnel for contract projects. The 1989 DNR Division of Forestry Work Plan identifies the need to prescribe burn 16,530 acres of grass, brush, and forest lands in Minnesota. DNR wildlife managers have identified approximately 40,000 acres that should be maintained by fire each year.

Since 1986 the demand for aspen has dramatically increased in many areas of the state. Planned industry expansions may greatly reduce the need to recycle aspen in the future. The change in the 1987 appropriation, which allowed for broader application of the funds, does not apply to the rest of the 1986 appropriation. With the declining need for aspen recycling and the increased need for prescribed fire and other management activities, the 1986 law needs to be changed to allow for broader application of the funds. ■



*Aspen recycling creates jobs, renews forests and benefits wildlife such as ruffed grouse.*



## ASPEN RECYCLING

Year	Planned Acres	Completed Acres
7/87—6/88	7,270	5,124
7/88—6/89	4,280	*

## PRESCRIBED BURNING

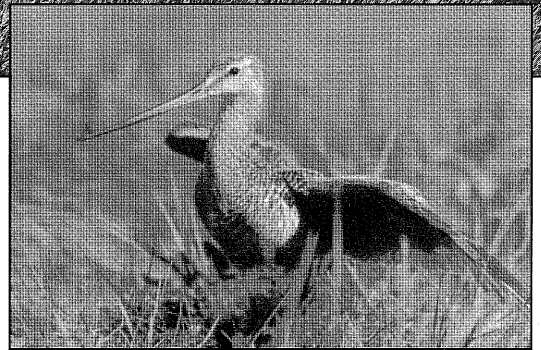
Year	Planned Acres	Completed Acres
7/87—6/88	7,270	9,786
7/88—6/89	16,530	**

\* Most of the Aspen Recycling projects are completed during the winter.  
 \*\* Most of the Prescribed Fire projects are completed during the spring.

## Prairie Bank



*Prairies are part of our heritage. The Prairie Bank preserves tracts of natural grasslands, protecting prairie plant species and wildlife species—such as the marbled godwit—for future Minnesotans to enjoy.*



LESS THAN one-half of one percent remains of the over 18 million acres of native prairie that once covered Minnesota. Fire suppression, intensive grazing and conversion to cropland have reduced the amount of native prairie to about 75,000 acres.

The RIM Prairie Bank Program was established in 1987 to help protect and conserve these remaining natural grasslands. Under this program, the DNR has the authority to enter into conservation easements with landowners who own native prairie. For land to be eligible for the Prairie Bank, it must never have been plowed, be covered with less than 10 percent trees and have predominately native prairie vegetation.

Landowners are paid through the Prairie Bank Program to protect and manage their prairie land. The acquisition of conservation easements will permit the DNR to work cooperatively with these landowners to preserve native grassland. The management of prairie bank easements may consist of prescribed burning,

prescribed grazing, or regulated haying to enhance and maintain the native prairie plants.

The Prairie Bank Program was allocated \$300,000 in 1987 for the purchase of native prairie easements, either limited (a minimum of 20 years) or permanent. Permanent easements, however, must be given the highest priority.

The acquisition of Prairie Bank easements got under way in 1988. At first, progress appeared to be slow, because potential sites had to be carefully evaluated. This important time-consuming step ensured that the easement dollars went to the most important sites.

Two easements covering 150 acres were acquired in 1988. Ten additional easements covering approximately 1,000 acres are planned for 1989. ■



*"With our proposed plan we have an historic opportunity to provide national leadership by demonstrating to other states that a sweeping natural resources restoration plan can be used to benefit the state tourist economy and the state farm economy."*

—from "The Report of the Governor's Citizen Commission to Promote Hunting and Fishing in Minnesota," December, 1984.



REINVEST IN MINNESOTA (RIM) is administered under the Department of Agriculture and the Board of Water and Soil Resources, Southbridge Office Building, Suite 104, 155 South Wabasha Street, St. Paul, MN 55107, (612) 296-3767, Wayne Edgerton, Coordinator; and the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, RIM Coordinator, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4020, (612) 297-1308.

Written by Denice DeFrates, Board of Water and Soil Resources, and Tom Dickson, DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife.  
Designed by Tom Dickson

## Thanks !

Any program serving the citizens of Minnesota needs to hear from those it serves. Nearly 30 people turned out last April at three public input meetings to let us know how we're doing. Several more mailed in comments.

Although RIM enjoys tremendous support across the state, several suggestions pointed out ways the program could be improved.

Some landowners have said it takes too long to complete an easement with RIM Reserve. Because the easement process was a new endeavor for the Department of Agriculture, it has taken time to work out some of the earlier problems. We have speeded up the easement process; however, easements always take more time to properly complete than simple contracts do. We believe that the added environmental protection that easements provide to the citizens of this state justify the extra effort.

Some attending the input meetings said they felt that the Department of Natural Resources should spend more RIM dollars in the farmland areas of southwestern Minnesota. Others argued that the Department of Agriculture needs to bolster its RIM efforts in the northeastern third of the state. Throughout Minnesota the need for resource management far exceeds the work being done. With the funding we've received for RIM, we've tried to distribute projects equitably across the state.

It was suggested that Living Snowfence easements would be more attractive to landowners if the required number of rows was reduced to three. To change the current six row requirement will require legislative action. Several aspects of the Living Snowfence easement effort are now being discussed.

Several citizens noted that some local tax assessors continue to tax RIM Reserve easements as cropland. In some cases the annual tax assessments soon outweigh the one-time easement payment. The Department of Revenue has encouraged assessors to consider adjustments for perpetual easements. However, we will continue to discuss options that are fair to both sides.

Finally, it was suggested that we need to protect land that already has good permanent cover, not just cropland that once provided such cover. We agree, and believe this applies to all current land retirement programs. We will be encouraging the Legislature to discuss this issue during the 1989 session, particularly for wetland restorations and land adjacent to streams, rivers, and lakes.

We'd like to thank the Minnesotans who took the time to review RIM and suggest how it could be improved. If you have a comment, please let us know. ■

