

4044 - North Dakota Conservation Forage Program

Application Details

Funding Opportunity:	3515-Outdoor Heritage Fund September 2020 - Round 17	Initial Submit Date:	Sep 1, 2020 2:56 PM
Funding Opportunity Due Date:	Sep 2, 2020 5:00 PM	Initially Submitted By:	Sarah Hewitt
Program Area:	Outdoor Heritage Fund	Last Submit Date:	
Status:	Under Review	Last Submitted By:	
Stage:	Final Application		

Contact Information

Primary Contact Information

Active User*:	Yes
Type:	External User
Name:	Salutation Sarah Middle Name First Name
	Hewitt Last Name
Title:	Conservation Programs Manager
Email*:	sarah.hewitt@audubon.org
Address*:	2315 University Drive N Ste. 15 Audubon Dakota Fargo North Dakota City State/Province 58102 Postal Code/Zip
Phone*:	701-298-3373 Ext. Phone ### ### ####
Fax:	### ### ####

Organization Information

Status*:	Approved
Name*:	Audubon Dakota
Organization Type*:	In-State Non-Profit
Tax Id:	Audubon Dakota
Organization Website:	
Address*:	2315 University Drive N Ste. 15 Fargo North Dakota City State/Province 58102-____ Postal Code/Zip
Phone*:	701-298-3373 Ext. ### ### ####
Fax:	### ### ####
Benefactor:	
Vendor ID:	

Comments:

PeopleSoft

Supplier ID:

Comments::

Location Code:

**SAM.gov Entity
ID:**

**SAM.gov
Name:**

**SAM.gov Entity
ID Expiration
Date:**

State Issued ID:

Category #:

Year Begin:

Year Closed:

NCES#:

Budget

Objective of Grant

Objective of Grant:

The North Dakota Conservation Forage Program aims to improve overall soil and habitat health by providing the essential financial and technical assistance to private landowners to restore critical conservation cover and implement adaptive land management.

Summary

Grant Request:	\$6,918,306.00
Matching Funds:	\$3,188,871.00
Total Project Costs:	\$10,107,177.00
You must have at least 25% match	
Percentage of Match:	31.55%

Project Expenses

Project Expense Description	OHF Request	Match Share (Cash)	Match Share (In-Kind)	Match Share (Indirect)	Other Project Sponsor's Share	Total Each Project Expense
Transition Support	\$3,780,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,780,000.00
Forage Planting	\$2,518,306.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,678,871.00	\$4,197,177.00
Site Prep and Seeding	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$810,000.00	\$810,000.00
Grazing Infrastructure	\$400,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$400,000.00	\$800,000.00
Technical Assistance	\$220,000.00	\$0.00	\$300,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$520,000.00
	\$6,918,306.00	\$0.00	\$300,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,888,871.00	\$10,107,177.00

Budget Narrative

Budget Narrative:

Transition Payments: Annual transition payments will be based on the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) county-level cropland rental rates. The budget includes the 2020 North Dakota average NASS cropland rental rate of \$70/acre (<https://quickstats.nass.usda.gov/results/58B27A06-F574-315B-A854-9BF568F17652#7878272B-A9F3-3BC2-960D-5F03B7DF4826>). Actual transition payments are expected to be approximately this average per acre rate. CFP will provide transition payments for the first three years of enrollment between 2021 and 2025, for at least 18,000 acres. Therefore, Audubon Dakota is requesting \$3,780,000 ($\$70 \times 18,000 \text{ acres} = \$1,260,000$. $\$1,260,000 \times 3 \text{ years} = \$3,780,000$) from the ND Outdoor Heritage Fund for the transition payments.

Conservation Forage: CFP will provide 60% cost share to landowners for planting conservation forage cover on project acres. To calculate this cost, Audubon Dakota used the 2020 NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) per acre rate for native forb and grass mix of \$256.81 (ID #2335) as detailed in the 550 Native, Wildlife, Pollinator Seed Range Planting (ND State Scenarios) and \$22.75/ac. for tame grass plantings (ID #2319). Audubon Dakota aims to plant at least 18,000 acres, therefore the total conservation cover costs are \$4,197,177, and Audubon Dakota is requesting 60% support from OHF at \$2,518,306 Landowners will be responsible for the remaining 40%, or \$1,678,871, which will be recorded as project match.

Site Preparation: Landowners will be responsible for prepping their project acres for seeding, and these actions will be recorded as project match. To estimate this match contribution, Audubon Dakota assumed that it will take a landowner 3 hours to prep and seed one acre, therefore, $(3 \text{ hours} \times 18,000 \text{ acres}) \times \$15/\text{hr.} = \$810,000$.

Grazing Infrastructure: Rates will follow the applicable year's NRCS Office Tech Guide Allowable Cost recommendations by OHF for perimeter fencing and water development infrastructure. CFP will provide landowners 50% cost-share payment (\$400,000), while landowners will provide the remaining 50% cost-share (\$400,000) which will be recorded as project match.

Technical Assistance: Audubon Dakota, NDWF, Delta Waterfowl and NDNRT will be providing program delivery and technical assistance in the form of habitat management plan development, restoration guidance, and grazing system planning. Audubon Dakota is requesting \$220,000 from the ND Outdoor Heritage Fund for program delivery. Project partners will be contributing \$300,000 in in-kind match.

Bid Attachments

Description	File Name	Type	Size	Upload Date
No files attached.				

Match Funding

Match Amount	Funding Source	Match Type
\$50,000.00	Delta Waterfowl	In-Kind
\$250,000.00	Audubon Dakota	In-Kind
\$2,078,871.00	Enrolled Landowners - cost share	Cash
\$810,000.00	Enrolled Landowners - site prep/seeding	In-Kind
\$3,188,871.00		

In-Kind

In-Kind Total:

Description

Directives

- Major Directive*:** Directive B
Choose One
- Additional Directive:** Directive C
Choose All That Apply
- Type of Agency*:** Tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation
Choose One

Abstract/Executive Summary

Abstract/Executive Summary*:

The North Dakota Conservation Forage Program (CFP) encourages and supports ranchers and farmers to restore forage-based cover on enrolled lands. The CFP is designed to accelerate grassland restoration while supporting the adoption of adaptive land management to improve grassland and soil health across the state. Audubon Dakota and partners will deliver the program across all North Dakota counties. CFP will assist landowners with the upfront investment associated with initiating new management decisions and the potential foregone income by providing land use transition support for the first three years of enrollment, in addition to 60% cost-share for cover seed and 50% cost-share for grazing infrastructure.

The objectives of CFP include enrolling at least 18,000 acres of private lands over a four-year project period to improve soil health, forage quality and wildlife habitat by integrating grazing and/or haying land management techniques. Enrolled landowners are expected to maintain the established conservation forage for a 10-year term, with a ?buy out? option.

Audubon Dakota is requesting \$6,918,306 from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund to initiate the North Dakota CFP. Costs include \$3,780,000 for transition payments across the project period, \$2,518,306 for 60% cost share for forage plantings, \$400,000 for 50% cost share for grazing infrastructure, and \$220,000 for program delivery. Total project match \$2,888,871 from enrolled landowners cost share and in-kind site preparation, plus \$300,000 in-kind match from program partners.

Project Duration

Project Duration*:

February 1, 2021 to January 31, 2025.

The first two years of implementation (Feb. 1, 2021-Jan. 31, 2023) will be focused on a statewide open enrollment period, followed by enrolling at least 18,000 acres, restoring enrolled acres to forage and installing grazing infrastructure where applicable. Transition support (based on current annual county cropland NASS rental rates) will be provided to enrolled landowners annually on the agreement execution date for three years.

Narrative

Narrative

Briefly summarize your organization's history, mission, current programs and activities. Include an overview of your organizational structure, including board, staff and volunteer involvement.

Organization Information*:

Audubon Dakota is the North and South Dakota state program within the National Audubon Society. Since 1905, the National Audubon Society has been focused on conserving bird habitat, promoting avian education, and engaging individuals and communities in a variety of activities and opportunities. Audubon Dakota as a state program was instituted in 1997, however Audubon's role in the Dakotas spans back to the mid-1970s.

The mission of the National Audubon Society is to protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation.

Audubon seeks partnerships that advance its habitat conservation goals, including supporting rural and urban grassland habitat projects and the ranching industry. As a state office, Audubon Dakota has eight full time staff members for the two-state region (North and South Dakota). Audubon Dakota's Advisory Board is comprised of eight North Dakota citizens with backgrounds ranging from agriculture, science, politics, medicine, law, finance, and education. Through multiple annual volunteer events focused on stewardship and education, Audubon Dakota organizes nearly 50 volunteers each year and 10,000 people engaged.

Currently, Audubon Dakota leads the implementation of the Prairie Management Toolbox in eight North Dakota counties (funded by ND OHF) and across South Dakota, while also implementing the Audubon Conservation Ranching Initiative in both states. At the urban level, Audubon Dakota and partners lead the Urban Woods and Prairies Initiative across four North Dakota cities (Bismarck, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot) work is funded by ND OHF) and one Minnesota city (Moorhead, MN).

For all of our programs, the efforts and cooperation of our supporters is crucial to our success and the conservation of bird habitat in the Dakotas.

Describe the proposed project identifying how the project will meet the specific directive(s) of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Program.

Identify project goals, strategies and benefits and your timetable for implementation. Include information about the need for the project and whether there is urgency for funding. Indicate if this is a new project or if it is replacing funding that is no longer available to your organization. Identify any innovative features or processes of your project.

Note: if your proposal provides funding to an individual, the names of the recipients must be reported to the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund. These names will be disclosed upon request.

If your project involves an extenuating circumstance to exempted activities please explain.

Purpose of Grant*:

As a new conservation program, the ND CFP will encourage and support ND producers with the adoption of adaptive management, the restoration of grassland pastures to improve rangeland habitat, and expand the state's graze-able acreage with term protection. CFP is an innovative compliment to current conservation programs that provide funding for resource-conserving cover. Enrolled CFP landowners will be provided financial and technical assistance to aid the incorporation of working grassland elements on their privately owned acres, such as grazing and haying management.

CFP will enroll and restore at least 18,000 acres of currently cropped lands with 10-year non-conversion agreement. Audubon Dakota will provide 60% cost-share for the conservation forage seed mix while also providing landowners transition support based on current NASS county cropland rental rates for the first three years of enrollment to assist with new management and potential foregone income.

Restored perennial forage typically require three growing seasons to establish healthy, resilient plant communities before grazing or haying management should take place. To encourage planned, rotational management of enrolled acres after the third year of restoration, Audubon Dakota will provide 50% cost share for grazing infrastructure, such as perimeter fencing and water development. Haying after the third growing season will be permitted but restricted until after July 15, which marks the end of the primary ground-nesting period.

CFP will be available across North Dakota. To assist the selection process, projects will be ranked based on specific criteria; however, projects not meeting each criteria will not be disqualified. Additionally, Audubon Dakota staff will lead the development of habitat management plans (HMP) alongside the landowner to address key project aspects such as site history, ecological descriptions, management goals, and timeline.

Landowners will have the option to un-enroll from CFP through a "buy-out" option. If this option is chosen within the first three years of enrollment, the landowners will be required to reimburse 110% of all payments received through the CFP. Any time after the first three years, the landowners will be required to reimburse at gradually receding percentages starting at 60% in year 4 and decreasing by 10% in subsequent years. For example, in year 7 a landowner would be required to pay 30% of all project costs.

Please list the counties that would be impacted by this project:

Counties*: Statewide

Is This Project Part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan?* No

If Yes, Please Provide Copy of Plan:

Does Your Project Involve an Extenuating Circumstance?* No

Please Explain:

Provide a description of how you will manage and oversee the project to ensure it is carried out on schedule and in a manner that best ensures its objectives will be met. Include a brief background and work experience for those managing the project.

Management of Project*:

managing the project. (3000 characters):

The program management and administration will be Audubon Dakota's responsibilities, with technical assistance being a shared effort between Audubon Dakota, North Dakota Wildlife Federation, Delta Waterfowl, and the North Dakota Natural Resources Trust.

Key project staff members from Audubon Dakota include:

Marshall Johnson, V.P. Audubon Conservation Ranching, Executive Director: Marshall serves as Vice-President of the National Audubon Society, where, for the past decade, he's worked to build rural and urban community-focused habitat and ecosystem programs. Equipped with a business degree from the University of Minnesota, Marshall strives to bring conservation into the 21st century, creating eco-friendly profit centers and urban habitat initiatives driven by the ecosystem services they provide to communities

Sarah Hewitt, Conservation Programs Manager: Sarah earned a Bachelor's of Liberal Arts in Environmental Studies from the University of Minnesota Morris, and a Masters of Natural Resources Management from North Dakota State University. Sarah has extensive experience with conservation program development, implementation, and management through her time with Audubon. She will be responsible for ensuring delivery of program goals including agreement execution, enrollment, and goal tracking.

Joshua Lefers, Working Lands Program Manager: Joshua oversees all working lands efforts in North and South Dakota. Joshua has a BS in Wildlife and Fisheries from South Dakota State University and years of experience in both the natural resource and agricultural sectors. Joshua will be responsible for engaging program partners, coordinating landowner engagement and enrollment, and coordinating HMP development.

Lucy Britton, Range Ecologist: Lucy earned a BS in Biological Sciences from Clemson University, and has extensive experience in avian and vegetation surveys, and landowner engagement. Lucy will be responsible for landowner engagement and enrollment, and HMP development and implementation.

Julianna Bosmoe, Range Ecologist: Julianna earned a BS in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from South Dakota State University, and has extensive experience in biological surveys, conservation easements, and prescribed fire. Julianna will be responsible for landowner engagement and enrollment, and HMP development and implementation.

Indicate how the project will be funded or sustained in future years. Include information on the sustainability of this project after OHF funds have been expended and whether the sustainability will be in the form of ongoing management or additional funding from a different source.

Sustainability*:

If awarded and program goals are achieved throughout the proposed project period, Audubon Dakota and partners would continue to pursue program support through the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund in the future. To expand program impact, additional financial support will be explored through sources such as Natural Resource Conservation Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and individual donors, thus leveraging federal resources to support this state-based approach.

Indicate how the project will be affected if less funding is available than that requested.

Partial Funding*:

If partial funding was awarded for the CFP, the extent of impact would be reduced. However, Audubon Dakota would continue pursuing additional funding in order to secure full funding for this critical North Dakota conservation program.

If you are a successful recipient of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars, how would you recognize the Outdoor Heritage Fund partnership? * There must be signage at the location of the project acknowledging OHF funding when appropriate. If there are provisions in that contract that your organization is unable to meet, please indicate below what those provisions would be.

Partnership Recognition*:

When appropriate, signage will be installed recognizing the financial support provided by OHF and other project supporters at sites enrolled in the North Dakota CFP. Additionally, as the project becomes fully implemented throughout the project landscape and collaborations with landowners begin, Audubon Dakota and partners will place an emphasis on promoting the program and project supporters through newspaper articles and local news exposure.

Do you have any supporting documents, such as maps or letters of support that you would like to provide? If so, please provide them in a single file.

Supporting Documents*: Yes

If Yes, Please Provide Copies in a Single File: ND CFP Support Letters.pdf

Awarding of Grants - Review the appropriate sample contract for your organization. Sample Contract

Can You Meet All the Provisions of the Sample Contract?* Yes

If there are provisions in that contract that your organization is unable to meet, please indicate below what those provisions would be:

Provisions Unable to Meet:

Tasks

Tasks

Task	Start Date	Completion Date
Enroll 18,000 acres in the Conservation Forage Program	02/01/2021	01/31/2023
Provide transition payments and cost share payments for grazing infrastructure to landowners	02/01/2021	01/31/2025
Restore enrolled acres	05/01/2021	12/31/2022

Description of Tasks

Please Describe Tasks:

The first two years of implementation will be focused on enrolling at least 18,000 acres. To assist the selection process, projects will be ranked based on specific criteria; however, projects not meeting each criteria will not be disqualified. Between May '21 and Dec. '22 enrolled landowners will receive financial and technical assistance to seed enrolled acres. Throughout the entire project period landowners will be offered transition payments and cost share for grazing infrastructure.

Deliverables

Deliverables

Deliverable	Quantity	Unit of Measurement, if applicable
Program Enrollment and Transition Support	18000.000	Acres
Restore enrolled acres and provide cost-share for grazing infrastructure	18000.000	acres

Certification

Certification

Certification: Yes

Name: Sarah Hewitt
First Name Last Name

Title: Conservation Programs Manager
Title

Date: 09/01/2020

Internal Application Number

#/ID:

Industrial Commission Action

Industrial Commission Action

Date of Commission meeting*:

Did the Commission approve funding?*

If Yes, what is the approved funding level?:

Are there any contingencies?*

If Yes, what are the contingencies?:

Minutes:



August 31, 2020

North Dakota Industrial Commission
Outdoor Heritage Fund
600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 405
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear North Dakota Industrial Commission,

I am writing today to express Delta Waterfowl's enthusiastic support for Audubon Dakota's North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund grant titled, North Dakota Conservation Forage Program. We strongly support this grant application and the focus on working with farmers and ranchers to create nesting cover while also allowing continued production. We believe this to be a significant win-win for both conservation and agriculture and a uniquely "made in North Dakota" approach to seek new conservation solutions that work well within our agricultural systems.

We believe the North Dakota Conservation Forage Program will be a very good fit for producers looking to put cropland into some form of forage production. In an environment of relatively low commodity prices, there is a demonstrated demand amongst North Dakota producers to seek alternate means of making their lands work for their operations. The program presented here, including the transition payments, cost-shared investments in forage establishment, and other infrastructure investments should be an attractive option for landowners.


The partnership between Audubon Dakota and Delta is an effort to seek new and collaborative approaches to marrying conservation outcomes on working farms and ranches. This project and a significant grant from the Outdoor Heritage Fund would greatly catalyze this new and innovative approach. Delta Waterfowl is very supportive of this project and to that end, we are both encouraging your support of the project and also committing \$50,000.00 in technical assistance funding to guide implementation of the project.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,


John L. Devney
Senior Vice President

Thank you -
we think this
program has great
promise for ND
producers + wildlife





NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

August 28, 2020

North Dakota Industrial Commission
Outdoor Heritage Fund
600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 405
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear North Dakota Industrial Commission,

I write on behalf of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation in support of Audubon Dakota's North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund grant titled, North Dakota Conservation Forage Program. We strongly support this grant application and the focus on empowering landowners to restore perennial forage-based cover on enrolled lands and providing technical assistance for the adoption of adaptive land management to improve rangeland and soil health.

Through Audubon Dakota's North Dakota Conservation Forage Program, enrolled landowners will receive transition payments for the first three years of enrollment to aid implementation of new management and offset potential foregone income, in addition to cost-share opportunities for perennial forage cover seed and grazing infrastructure. Audubon and project partner staff will provide technical assistance through habitat management plan development, and resource monitoring. By providing this technical and financial assistance to North Dakota private landowners, the North Dakota Conservation Forage Program will restore critical perennial conservation forage cover to improve overall soil and habitat health.

North Dakota Wildlife Federation is the oldest grassroots wildlife conservation organization in North Dakota. For over 85 years, NDWF has worked across the state with numerous partners and affiliated clubs to protect North Dakota's fish and wildlife, lands and waters, and outdoor heritage.

The partnership between Audubon Dakota and North Dakota Wildlife Federation continues to grow, all in support of healthy and sustainable working lands in North Dakota. This grant would help expand that success. The North Dakota Wildlife Federation therefore fully supports the goals and commitments presented within the Audubon Dakota North Dakota Conservation Forage Program ND OHF grant application, and we look forward to seeing the program implemented.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

David Dewald
President



**NORTH DAKOTA
NATURAL RESOURCES
TRUST**

Keith Trego
Executive Director

1605 East Capitol Avenue, Ste. 101

Bismarck, ND 58501-2102

(701) 223-8501

FAX: (701) 223-6937

August 26, 2020

Karlene Fine, Executive Director
North Dakota Industrial Commission
ATTN: Outdoor Heritage Fund Program
State Capitol – Fourteenth Floor
600 East Boulevard Ave., Dept. 405
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Ms. Fine:

The North Dakota Natural Resources Trust's (NDNRT) mission is to preserve, enhance, restore, and manage wetlands and associated wildlife habitat, grasslands, and riparian areas in the state of North Dakota.

The Conservation Forage Program (CFP) captures the vision many partners shared when the OHF was created. Namely, a North Dakota designed and delivered conservation cover program focused on creating grassland habitat where none existed and providing enhanced management options for existing grasslands. The CFP provides the dual outcomes of environmental benefits combined with production agriculture sustainability. It provides both fiscal and technical assistance incentives to assist farmers and ranchers with their important land use decisions.

We are pleased to join Audubon Dakota and other partners in helping deliver the CFP and providing cost share to support this important program. The CFP has our full and enthusiastic support.

Sincerely,



Keith Trego, Executive Director