

# Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant Application



## Instructions

After completing the form, applications and supporting documentation may be submitted by e-mail to [ndicgrants@nd.gov](mailto:ndicgrants@nd.gov). It is preferred that only electronic copies are submitted.

You are not limited to the spacing provided, except in those instances where there is a limit on the number of words. If you need additional space, please indicate that on the application form, answer the question on a separate page, and include with your submission.

The application and all attachments must be received by the application deadline. You may submit your application at any time prior to the application deadline. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications prior to the deadline for staff review in order ensure that proposals will be complete when submitted on deadline date.** Incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

**Please review the back of this form to determine project eligibility, definitions, budget criteria, and statutory requirements.**

Project Name: North Dakota Grazing Management Toolbox

Name of Organization: Audubon Great Plains

Federal Tax ID#: 13-1624102

Contact Person/Title: Joshua Lefers, Director of Conservation

Address: 3002 Fiechtner Dr S, Ste A

City: Fargo

State: North Dakota

Zip Code: 58013

E-mail Address [joshua.lefers@audubon.org](mailto:joshua.lefers@audubon.org), [lindsey.lee@audubon.org](mailto:lindsey.lee@audubon.org)

Web Site Address (If applicable) [greatplains.audubon.org](http://greatplains.audubon.org)

Phone: 701-298-3373

List names of co-applicants if this is a joint proposal

**MAJOR Directive:**

Choose only one response

**Directive A.** Providing access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;

**Directive B.** Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

**Directive C.** Developing, enhancing, conserving and restoring wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

**Directive D.** Conserving natural areas and creating other areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

**Additional Directive:**

Choose all that apply

**Directive A.**

**Directive B.**

**Directive C.**

**Directive D.**

**Type of organization:**

State Agency

Political Subdivision

Tribal Entity

Tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation.

**Abstract/Executive Summary.**

Summarize the project, including its objectives, expected results, duration, total project costs and participants. (no more than 500 words)

The North Dakota Prairie Management Toolbox (NDPMT), led by Audubon Great Plains (AGP), will provide financial assistance to private landowners in North Dakota as a strategy to improve grassland habitat health on 7,500 acres. Project planning and coordination will be led by AGP range ecologists who will provide technical assistance to landowners through development of ranch-level habitat management plans (HMP).

Employing the lessons learned from past successful toolbox projects, NDPMT will provide cost-share and technical assistance for grazing infrastructure. This project will build on past successful Prairie Management Toolbox projects within North Dakota.

For this OHF grant application, Audubon is seeking \$635,000 from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund, largely directed at financial assistance for landowners. Across the three-year project period, Audubon will collaborate with private landowners to implement regenerative grassland management practices and install grazing infrastructure on 7,500 acres.

**Project Duration:** January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2028

**Indicate the intended schedule for drawing down OHF funds.**

Year one will focus on landowner engagement and agreement development. Most funds are anticipated to be allocated in year 1, with approximately 1/3 of funds anticipated to be spent each year.

**Amount of Grant request: \$ 635,000**

**Total Project Costs: \$ 1,234,506**

Note: in-kind and indirect costs can be used for matching funds.

**Amount of Matching Funds: \$ 599,506**

**A minimum of 25% Match Funding is required.** Indicate if the matching funds will be in-kind, indirect or cash. Please provide verification that these matching funds are available for your project. Note that effective as of July 1, 2015 no State General Fund dollars can be used for a match unless funding was legislatively appropriated for that purpose.

Amount of Match	Funding Source	Type of Match (Cash, In-kind or Indirect)
\$ 169,506	Audubon	Indirect
\$30,000	Audubon	Cash-Staff costs
\$400,000	Landowners	In Kind and cash share for project costs

**Certifications**

X I certify that this application has been made with the support of the governing body and chief executive of my organization.

X I certify that if awarded grant funding none of the funding will be used for any of the exemptions noted in the back of this application.

**Narrative**

**Organization Information**

Audubon Great Plains is the regional program for North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska 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 North Dakota 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 grassland habitat projects and the ranching industry. Audubon has five full time staff members in North Dakota, and Audubon Great Plains' Advisory Board includes eight North Dakota citizens. Currently, Audubon directly manages roughly 5,000 acres within the state and partners with landowners to inform management on an additional 150,000 acres in North Dakota. In all of our programs, the efforts and cooperation of our supporters is crucial to our success and the conservation of bird habitat in the Great Plains.

### **Purpose of Grant**

North Dakota Grazing Management Toolbox (NDGMT) is an expansion of past successful toolbox projects, which provide financial and technical assistance for conservation focused agricultural practices to improve grassland diversity and structure for wildlife and pollinators. This project will build on past successful Prairie Management Toolbox projects in North Dakota over the next four years, through December 2028.

NDGMT will implement grazing systems on approximately 7,500 acres of grazing land, primarily focused in eastern North Dakota. This goal meets Directives B and C by enabling landowners to switch from season-long grazing to rotational grazing or to enhance rotational grazing systems to allow for improved management. Fencing and adequate water infrastructure directly benefit producers through increased forage production, profitability, and forage quality. Rotational grazing also provides a diversity of structure for grassland birds and other wildlife. Financial assistance allows producers to quickly adopt and adapt to rotational grazing systems. Audubon is always looking towards innovation in grazing systems and is working with producers to identify implementation options for virtual fencing in North Dakota as the technology becomes available. Audubon is working with Ducks Unlimited and some early adopters of the technology to evaluate effectiveness and value of this new technology compared to traditional infrastructure. Acres with grazing systems provided through the Toolbox will be covered by a 10-year non-conversion agreement with Audubon Great Plains. Landowners will select the type of fencing and water infrastructure that best meets their needs based on OHF allowable reimbursement on current NRCS cost share payment rates and NRCS practice scenario guidance.

The Outdoor Heritage Fund award to Audubon Great Plains from fall 2023, North Dakota Prairie Management Toolbox, has seen significant demand. As of September 1, 2024, all dollars meant for grazing infrastructure have been allocated to contracts that are currently being implemented. Additionally, 2/3 of the funds for woody species removal are contracted for completion. Audubon has over 25 producers on a waiting list for grazing infrastructure. Thus, demand remains strong for technical and financial assistance to implement grazing management on ranches across North Dakota and Audubon Great Plains requests additional funding to continue to offer this valuable service to farmers and ranchers that are sustaining North Dakota's grasslands.

**Is this project part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan?    Yes    X    No**

## Management of Project

Audubon Great Plains will provide management, coordination, and administration to the NDGMT grant from the Audubon Great Plains office in Fargo, ND.

NDGMT will focus on grassland acres in the project area and 7,500 acres will be impacted within the project period through grazing infrastructure installation and grazing rotation planning. Landowners interested in additional cost share or public access incentives will be directed to the Private Lands Open To Sportsmen (PLOTS) program through the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

Audubon Great Plains staff will provide tracking and reporting for all project agreements following grant guidelines.

Joshua Lefers, Director of Conservation, will provide oversight of grant activities and expenses.

Juli Bosmoe, Working Lands Program Manager, will lead partnership development and contractor engagement.

Charlene Prodzinski, North Dakota Range Ecologist, will provide on-the-ground technical assistance to landowners enrolled in the Prairie Management Toolbox.

Lindsey Lee, Operations Manager, will be responsible for administrating the Prairie Management Toolbox project contracts and payment requests.

## Evaluation

The NDPMT project will be considered successful if, during the project period, acreage goals for each project objective are met, and landowners are approving and supportive of the services provided. Each enrolled landowner will collaborate with an Audubon Great Plains employee to develop a habitat management plan, detailing land management goals over the life of the project. Strategies to improve grassland productivity are incorporated into the habitat management plan and are evaluated through site and cattle health monitoring reports by the landowner and Audubon staff.

## Financial Information

### Project Budget

Project Expense	OHF Request	Applicant's Match Share (Cash)	Applicant's Match Share (In-Kind)	Applicant's Match Share (Indirect)	Other Project Sponsor's Share	Total Each Project Expense
Livestock and wildlife friendly grazing systems	\$600,000	\$	\$	\$	\$400,000	\$1,000,000
Cultural resource surveys	\$5,000	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$5,000
Staff	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$	\$	\$	\$60,000
Indirect	\$	\$	\$	\$169,506	\$	\$169,506
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$635,000</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$169,506</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$1,234,498</b>

Note: Costs for seeding, fencing, pipelines, wells, and cover crops cannot exceed NRCS Field Office Tech Guide without justification. Projects involving perimeter fencing must follow NRCS eligibility standards.

## **Budget Narrative**

**Livestock and Wildlife Friendly Grazing Systems:** Grazing system development support request of \$600,000 will follow the NRCS Office Tech Guidelines for Allowable Cost. Fencing will be provided to landowners at 60% cost-share payment based on NRCS cost-share payment rates. The water developments will use these rates for agreement development but will pay 60% cost-share based on actual costs. The landowners will provide the remaining 40% cost-share on both fence and water.

**Contractual Services:** Project expense rate was based upon industry average for cultural resource surveys of \$1,250/survey. Audubon anticipates up to 4 surveys over the course of the project period.

**Staff Time:** Audubon requests \$30,000 in line with the cap at 5% of total grant request, to cover portion of the staff expenses to implement project activities, including site visits, contracts management, and reporting. Audubon will match the staff time request with an additional \$30,000.

**Indirect rate:** Audubon will contribute indirect rate match of \$169,506. This indirect total is based on our federally negotiated indirect cost rate of 25.49% on project expenses.

## **Sustainability**

To sustain the impact and longevity of projects enrolled in the NDGMT, each project is protected by a 10-year non-conversion agreement to ensure that working grasslands assisted with financial and technical assistance remain as grasslands. Audubon intends to implement the NDGMT in response to sustained landowner interest. Infrastructure projects tend to be generational; grazing infrastructure typically needs regular maintenance to last for a couple of decades and provide conservation benefit during that time. Landowners that choose to tackle invasive species or rejuvenate their grasslands will need to provide ongoing monitoring and maintenance; Audubon Great Plains and partners are committed to having staffing to provide technical assistance to those landowners. This will ensure that the overall habitat management support resources the toolbox provides can be accessible well into the future.

Each enrolled producer will work with Audubon Great Plains in developing a Habitat Management Plan, a multi-year guide outlining best management practices for developing, maintaining, and improving project habitat. Audubon range ecologists revisit the HMPs with producers on a regular basis to ensure habitat and production goals are met.

## **Partial Funding**

If the ND Outdoor Heritage Fund is unable to fund a portion of NDGMT then program implementation will be delayed and/or reduced in scope, which could lead to missed opportunities for effective conservation within the conservation core area.

## **Partnership Recognition**

At each participating site that utilizes NDGMT and approves signage use, program signs will be installed recognizing the financial support provided by OHF and other project supporters. Additionally, as the project is implemented within the landscape, Audubon Great Plains will place an emphasis on promoting NDGMT and project supporters through newspaper articles and local news exposure.

### **Awarding of Grants**

Can you meet all the provisions of the sample contract?    X Yes  No

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

NORTH DAKOTA  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
**TRUST**

Keith Trego  
*Executive Director*  
1605 E Capitol Avenue, Ste. 101  
Bismarck, ND 58501-2102  
(701) 223-8501  
www.ndnrt.com

August 29, 2024

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

Dear North Dakota Industrial Commission:

I write on behalf of The North Dakota Natural Resources Trust (the Trust) in support of Audubon Great Plains' North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund grant project titled, *North Dakota Grazing Management Toolbox*. This project expands on the previously ND OHF funded projects a part of the Prairie Management Toolbox, which provide private landowners financial and technical support for grazing infrastructure, invasive species removal, and prairie restoration. To expand the impact of improving management, Audubon Dakota will improve and enhance habitat on 7,500 acres through development of grazing systems with the installation of grazing infrastructure.

From its inception, the Trust has played a role as facilitator between agricultural and conservation interests. In addition to facilitating and funding sound, on-the-ground conservation of natural resources, our goal is to identify common issues, create dialogue, and resolve conflicts. Through Audubon Dakota's working lands program, Audubon collaborates with ranchers to increase habitat for declining grassland birds by connecting them with tools to create healthy grasslands. By empowering private ranchers with technical assistance and the tools to improve management, Audubon can help ensure healthy grassland habitats remain on the landscape for the targeted grassland bird species, while also supporting rural communities.

The Trust therefore fully supports the goals and commitments presented within Audubon Great Plains' ND Outdoor Heritage Fund proposal, and we look forward to seeing the program continue its success in the coming years.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Keith Trego, Executive Director  
North Dakota Natural Resources Trust

To promote the retention, restoration, creation and wildlife friendly management of wetlands, grasslands and riparian areas by presenting practical conservation opportunities throughout North Dakota.



# United States Department of the Interior



**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
**North Dakota Partners for Fish and Wildlife Office**  
**3425 Miriam Avenue**  
**Bismarck, North Dakota 58501**

August 28, 2024

Reice Haase  
North Dakota Industrial Commission  
ATTN: Outdoor Heritage Fund Program  
600 East Boulevard Ave., Dept. 405  
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: North Dakota Prairie Management Toolbox OHF

Dear Mr. Haase:

I write on behalf of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's North Dakota Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (ND PFW) in support of Audubon Great Plains' North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund grant project titled, North Dakota Grazing Management Toolbox. This project expands on the previously ND OHF funded projects a part of the Prairie Management Toolbox, which provide private landowners financial and technical support for grazing infrastructure, invasive species removal, and prairie restoration. To expand the impact of improving management, Audubon Dakota will improve and enhance habitat on 7,500 acres through development of grazing systems with the installation of grazing infrastructure.

The ND PFW program has a long history of working closely with private landowners and conservation partners, providing financial and technical assistance on voluntary conservation efforts to restore, enhance and create wetland and grassland habitat on private land. The ND PFW program works closely with private landowners to foster partnerships on working lands that help conserve important wildlife habitat and also provide economic benefits for North Dakota's farmers and ranchers and other private landowners. Our approach is simple: Engage willing partners through non-regulatory incentives to conserve fish and wildlife values on their property. The ND PFW program was established in 1987 and since that time has worked on more than 4,200 habitat projects with more than 3,200 North Dakota farmers, ranchers, and other private landowners.

The ND PFW program therefore fully supports the goals and commitments presented within Audubon Great Plains' ND Outdoor Heritage Fund proposal, and we look forward to seeing the program continue its success in the coming years.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Scott J. McLeod,  
USFWS, State Coordinator, ND Partners for Fish and Wildlife