



# 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 **Grazed Wildlife Habitat - Meadowlark Initiative**

Name of Organization **United Prairie Foundation**

Federal Tax ID# **77-0639875**

Contact Person/Title **John DeVries, President**

Address **260 Front St**

City **Sheldon**

State **North Dakota**

Zip Code **58068**

E-mail Address **unitedprairie@mlgc.com**

Web Site Address (If applicable) **unitedprairie.org**

Phone **701-793-0668**

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

- North Dakota Game and Fish Department

**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)

United Prairie Foundation (UPF) is partnering with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department through a Cooperative Agreement to implement the Meadowlark Initiative. UPF and the Department seek to utilize the Outdoor Heritage Fund to implement patch-burn-grazing and expand landowner experience using controlled burning to manage

grasslands and enhance grazing. Research from NDSU's Central Grasslands Research Extension Center consistently demonstrates the benefits and necessity of fire in range management and shows patch-burn-grazing improves cattle forage while enhancing wildlife habitat.

This program, Grazed Wildlife Habitat, will implement patch-burn-grazing, remove invasive trees, and manage grasslands to increase diversity on private pastures in southeast ND. UPF has expertise and staff to carry out the program locally and provide guidance to other regions of the state. Native pastures that once consisted of highly diverse grasses and forbs have been invaded with nonnative plants. Many pastures now have very little native species richness or diversity. Where nonnative plants dominate the land, they provide low quality forage for grazers. Generations-old cattle farms are disappearing, with grasslands being converted to crops because of the poor condition of pastures. This keystone part of our outdoor heritage and economy is disappearing, but it can be reversed.

This project will improve working lands for ranchers, livestock, wildlife, and hunters. Up to 1,500 acres of pastures will be managed with patch-burn-grazing. This project focuses in southeastern ND where a fire-aware culture is being created through United Prairie Foundation's partnership with the Enderlin-Sheldon Volunteer Fire Department and local ranching community. There is a new prescribed burn association based in Leonard, the Sheyenne Delta Fire Restoration, and we will work with them to expand our reach and help build their program. More ranchers are interested in using fire to improve their land, and our project helps them do it safely. Regular implementation of controlled fire will also help rural communities and fire departments be prepared to fight wildfires like those recently seen in western ND.

In addition to funding landowner-driven conservation on a landscape level, this project will begin patch-burning up to 245 acres of demonstration plots. Community education and communication are crucial for sustaining change in the landscape, and these plots will be located in publicly visible areas with signage explaining the project and prescribed fire. These demonstration plots will be made available to the public, local schools, and NDSU and UND researchers. Additionally, ranchers and landowners will see the effects and success of patch-burn-grazing management on a small scale. These plots will show the benefits of using fire in wildlife habitat management and grazing.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Wildlife Action Plan identifies the loss and degradation of native grasslands as a conservation threat. The Meadowlark Initiative states that our state bird, the western meadowlark, and many other grassland birds are declining. North Dakota has lost most of its native prairie, therefore it's important to maintain remaining grasslands. This project seeks to reverse the loss and provide an example for communities across the state.

**Project Duration: 7 years**

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

Because ranchers may enroll in the program in 2025, 2026, or 2027, below is a general schedule for a 200 acre pasture that will begin using patch-burn-grazing management. Community outreach, education, and work in demonstration areas will begin immediately. Fencing repairs and temporary exclusion fencing will be completed when needed.

**Year 1:** Sign 10-year contract with rancher/landowners, NDGF, UPF. Assess native/nonnative plant community. Create a management plan, write a burn plan for the 200 acre whole pasture and four 50 acre patches. Burn the entire pasture in spring or fall. Remove invasive trees and add native seed where necessary. Reassess plant community, monitor changes in grazing.

**Year 2:** Burn patch 1. Continue monitoring plant community and grazing changes.

**Year 3:** Burn patch 2. Continue monitoring.

**Year 4:** Burn patch 3. Continue monitoring.

**Year 5:** Burn patch 4. Continue monitoring.

**Year 6:** Burn patch 1 again. Continue monitoring. (No OHF funds for fire)

**Year 7:** Burn patch 2 again. Continue monitoring. (No OHF funds for fire)

**Amount of Grant request: \$580,000**

**Total Project Costs: \$806,750**

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

**Amount of Matching Funds: \$ 226,750**

**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)
\$66,750	United Prairie Foundation	In-kind
\$160,000	North Dakota Game and Fish Department	Cash (non-state general fund)
\$		
\$		
\$		

## **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 – Briefly summarize your organization’s history, mission, current programs and activities.**

Include an overview of your organizational structure, including board, staff and volunteer involvement. (no more than 300 words)

United Prairie Foundation (UPF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Sheldon, North Dakota. Since 2004, UPF has worked on private and public lands to improve prairie and wetland habitats. Our mission is to "Make Prairie Common Again." This is achieved by managing existing grasslands to improve habitat, and we do not target crop acres for restoration. We specialize in prairie management and restoration using seed harvested by our staff by combine and by hand-picking 100+ native species from remnant prairies. We use innovative seeding methods to achieve success, and we use fire to manage all of our projects. We work closely with the Enderlin-Sheldon Volunteer Fire Department to safely and successfully perform prescribed burns. We employ a team of up to 10 people, have a board of directors consisting of local community members, and lead a steering committee to operate the Sheldon Community Center.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department’s mission is to protect, conserve and enhance fish and wildlife populations and habitats for sustained consumptive and nonconsumptive use. The Department delivers this to private lands through three main areas: 1) Conservation of habitats for fish and wildlife populations; 2) Provide landowners with assistance for developing, protecting wildlife and fisheries habitat; 3) Provide the public with opportunities to access resources on private land. The State Wildlife Action Plan addresses management of nongame and rare or declining fish and wildlife resources and their habitats and directs conservation efforts such as the Private Lands Initiative and Meadowlark Initiative. The Meadowlark Initiative is a statewide strategy to restore and enhance native grasslands; its vision is to promote and create healthy, thriving grasslands that provide biodiversity and prosperity for wildlife, pollinators, ranching operations and communities by supporting ranching, establishing grasslands, offsetting developmental impacts, promoting societal benefits, and advancing science and education.

### **Purpose of Grant – 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.

For tree/shrub/grass plantings: provide a planting plan describing the site design, planting methods, number of trees/shrubs by species and stock size, grass species and future maintenance. A statement certifying that the applicant will adhere to USDA-NRCS tree/shrub/grass planting specifications along with the name of the governmental entity designing the planting may be substituted for a planting plan.

For projects including Section 319 funding: provide in detail the specific best management practices that will be implemented and the specific projects for which you are seeking funding.

For projects including fencing: A minimum cost share of 40% by the recipient is preferred. Include detailed information on the type of fencing to be installed, whether funding is requested for boundary fencing, new or replacement of existing fencing, and/or cross fencing.

The purpose of this grant is to apply science-based range management on private lands in southeast North Dakota where tallgrass prairie is the native ecosystem. Our project will enhance conservation practices in this state by directly teaching producers how to patch-burn-graze, engaging volunteer fire departments, removing invasive trees, and providing demonstration areas that are open to the public to learn about the benefits of fire in working land management. UPF's recent work implementing fire in private pastures and hay meadows has taken notice and there is increasing demand for fire from local producers. This grant seeks to expand our ability to impact more acres and help interested ranchers safely use fire to increase the resiliency of their operation while enhancing wildlife habitat.

Patch-burning is when just a portion of a pasture is burned prior to grazing. This management mimics the historic grazing habits of bison who preferred to graze the fresh growth after fire. Cattle show the same preference for post-fire grazing, demonstrated in many recent studies at NDSU's Central Grasslands Research Extension Center. In patch-burn-grazing, cattle still have access to the entire pasture but prefer to graze in burned patches because of the fresh regrowth. Regrowth after burning provides more vigorous, nutritious, and palatable forage. Cattle prefer to stay out of unburned areas, and the unburned patches provide dense cover for wildlife while acting as a forage food bank for cattle. Patch-burn-grazing does not use cross fencing or rotations.

This project does not require grazing deferral or land rent payments, but restores grazing land without excluding cattle and will change pasture conditions to improve cattle gains and wildlife habitat. Within 1 season, participants will see better cow/calf gains and a reduction of noxious weeds and woody vegetation on their property. Many pastures are in poor condition today; they are overgrazed, weedy, and of little value to cows or wildlife. Ranchers, landowners, and sportsmen in the area recognize that change is needed in the landscape for ranching to continue, and this project implements the needed changes.

Pastures enrolled in the Grazed Wildlife Habitat program will receive a full burn in their first year, with patch-burn-grazing management implemented in the following years and continuing into the future. For example, a 200 acre pasture would be burned in 2025, 50

acres of it would be burned in 2026, then a different 50 acres burned in 2027, and so on until the 4-year cycle starts over and there are distinct patches of varying plant height and density. The exact acreage of burned patches will vary slightly, with pastures being divided into 3-5 patches depending on management needs, plant community, and total pasture acres. We will burn with each rancher for 4-5 years, then they will have the experience, local fire connections, and incentive to continue burning as part of their cattle operation. We are aiming for 1,500 acres of pastures to be managed with patch-burn-grazing, and so will burn approximately 3,000 acres total over the project period. Invasive tree removal will likely be needed on only a portion of the enrolled acres, so we are requesting funding for up to 200 acres of tree removal.

Local fire departments will be engaged in prescribed burning alongside UPF's staff. We have an active and successful prescribed fire association with the Enderlin-Sheldon Volunteer Fire Department. We regularly partner with them to perform controlled burns, and we share our equipment for wildfire events or other emergencies. Our partnership extends to the community as well, because UPF operates the Sheldon Community Center that shares a building with the VFD Fire Hall. Our long time partnership has increased preparedness and experience for the VFD to take on wildfires and crop fires. To accomplish safe prescribed burns outside of the Enderlin-Sheldon VFD District, we will expand our connections to other volunteer fire departments and engage them in similar ways.

Pastures that may have been farmed but were seeded many years ago to a low diversity mix (usually only a few grass species, with little to no forbs) will be diversified with additional native seed. Some sites may also have large areas of bare soil with little to no existing vegetation. Native forbs, cool season, and warm season grasses will be seeded to restore native plants into tame pastures. It is necessary to restore plant diversity for more nutritious grazing and to enhance wildlife habitat. UPF has demonstrated success with interseeding natives into brome or Kentucky bluegrass, and the big key to that success is fire. Seed for tame pastures will be local ecotype, adapted to site conditions, and originate from 0-100 miles of the project sites. Seed used in this project will originate from both wild and restored prairies in North Dakota harvested by UPF, and it is professionally lab-tested for weeds and viability.

Two restored properties previously funded by the OHF as Prairie Seed Plots (contract 2-24 Prairie Project) will continue being managed by UPF as the demonstration areas, and they are part of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's PLOTS program. One property is located on a high traffic highway and will be highly visible, and both properties are publicly accessible. Both properties (total 245 acres) will continue to be used for seed harvest, and burning them will be done in-kind so as to not repeat OHF funding on previously funded properties.

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

If yes, provide a copy with the application

*Note: Projects involving buildings and infrastructure will only be considered if part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Please refer to the "Definitions" section at the back of the form for more details.*

**Management of Project – 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.

John DeVries - UPF Founder and President. John has implemented habitat management on private and public lands in eastern North Dakota since 2004, with a stronger focus on native seed harvest and diverse prairie restoration since 2010. John's long term seed harvest partnerships with support from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, private landowners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service have proven successful and contributed to many restoration projects in eastern North Dakota. John identifies quality native seed harvest locations, harvests seed by hand-picking or combine harvest, determines pasture management needs, and has performed prescribed burns for 14 years. He connects and communicates with landowners, producers, and other community stakeholders to achieve local conservation. John and his team have the knowledge, ability, and local presence required to make this project a success.

Patrice Delaney - Senior Biologist. Patrice has worked with native prairie since 2018. In her research at Minnesota State University Moorhead, she studied grassland restorations, native plant community interactions with prescribed fire, performed various wildlife surveys, and studied herbarium record keeping and seed collection. With UPF since 2023, Patrice identifies plants, determines seed viability, harvests seed, determines range management needs, assists with burning, and develops educational programming and outreach materials.

Kevin Kading - Kevin has served as the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Private Lands Section Leader for 20 years. In this capacity he manages the state's habitat and access program, Private Land Open To Sportsmen (PLOTS), and administers a \$28 million budget with 14 staff. He coordinates various habitat projects with state, federal and nonprofit groups, including United Prairie Foundation. He also manages the Department's Big Game Depredation program with a \$2 million budget. He has managed and administered numerous state, federal and private grants over 20 years that have impacted over one million acres of private land. Most recently, he was involved in the creation and vision for the North Dakota Meadowlark Initiative, a statewide strategy to restore and enhance native grasslands and has been successfully awarded two USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Grants and a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant totaling over \$20 million for native prairie restoration, enhancement and protection.

**Evaluation – Describe your plan to document progress and results.**

Please be specific on the methods you will utilize to measure success. Note that regular reporting, final evaluation and expenditure reports will be required for every grant awarded.

Plant species composition will be evaluated prior to and following patch-burn-grazing management through plant surveys and periodic photographs. In addition to the effects of fire and grazing, activities such as seeding, mowing, invasive tree removal, and their effects will be recorded. Native plant abundance/diversity and cattle herd gains will be the main measures of success. Feedback from participating ranchers will be one of the most important measures of the project's success. Restoration methods used will be reported to OHF for

continued learning in grassland management to enhance conservation practices in this state. Sites will also be made available for research through universities or through the Meadowlark Initiative.

## Financial Information

### Project Budget – Use the table below to provide an itemized list of project expenses and describe the matching funds being utilized for this project.

Indicate if the matching funds are in the form of cash, indirect costs or in-kind services. The budget should identify all other committed funding sources and the amount of funding from each source. **A minimum of 25% match funding is required.** An application will be scored higher the greater the amount of match funding provided. (See Scoring Form.)

Certain values have been identified for in-kind services as detailed under “Budget Information” at the back of this form. Refer to that section and utilize these values in identifying your matching funds.

**NOTE: No indirect costs will be funded. Supporting documentation for project expenses, including bids, must be included or application will be considered incomplete.**

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
Prescribed Burn Plans, Burn Breaks, Execution (3,245 total acres)	\$450,000	\$	\$36,750 (demonstration plots)	\$	\$	\$486,750
Fire Skid Unit	\$	\$15,000 (NDGF)	\$	\$	\$	\$15,000
High Diversity Local Ecotype Seed & Seeding	\$	\$100,000 (NDGF)	\$20,000	\$	\$	\$120,000
Invasive tree removal	\$100,000	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$100,000
Outreach and Education	\$10,000	\$	\$5,000	\$	\$	\$15,000
Monitoring, management plans	\$20,000	\$	\$4,000	\$	\$	\$24,000
Fencing		\$45,000 (NDGF)	\$1,000	\$	\$	\$46,000
	<b>\$580,000</b>	<b>\$160,000</b>	<b>\$66,750</b>			<b>\$806,750</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 – Use the space below to provide additional detail regarding project expenses.**

Prescribed Burning: Burn plans will be written by UPF staff and reviewed by NRCS. Burn breaks and prep work are included in the estimated cost. Burns will be conducted by UPF, landowners/ranchers, local VFD, and ND fire contractors may be hired to assist with additional acres. Estimate includes burning 1,500 total acres initially, with patch-burning approximately 375 acres each year for at least 4 years, for 3,000+ total acres burned over the grant period. Estimated at \$150 per acre. UPF has prescribed fire insurance, professionally trained fire staff, and will be liable for burns. Landowners will also be encouraged to have coverage for burning. In-kind match will be provided by UPF to burn demonstration plots.

Fire skid unit: An additional fire skid unit will be purchased for prescribed fire and made available to the Volunteer Fire Department and for use by landowners. This will be a free resource that people can put in the back of a pickup truck or UTV to perform prescribed burning or fight wildfires. It will have a water tank, pump system, fire resistant hose, and a rescue stretcher. NDGF will fund this item.

Seed & Seeding: Seed will be necessary in pastures that were previously farmed and were seeded with low diverse or nonnative grass. Seeding into an existing plant community works when fire is part of the management. Up to 300 acres will be reseeded with high diverse, locally sourced seed estimated at \$400 per acre. This cost reflects about half of the actual cost of high quality local native seed. Seed for this project (50+ species) is harvested by UPF from wild remnant prairies and from seed plots established by UPF. Seed is tested to ensure it is weed free and viable. Additional native grass seed may be purchased from commercial seed producers if local ecotype sources cannot be harvested. NDGF and UPF will fund seed for this project.

Invasive tree removal: Some pastures will likely require woody removal for species such as Russian olive, Siberian elm, and cedars. Trees in the landscape are often detrimental to breeding grassland birds and waterfowl. Cost includes estimated 200 acres of tree removal and herbicide treatment if necessary.

$\$650/\text{acre} \times 75\% = \sim\$490/\text{acre}, \times 200 \text{ acres} = \sim \$100,000$

Monitoring, management plans: UPF will assess plant communities prior to writing burn plans and will monitor changes in response to fire, invasive tree removal, and grazing. Monitoring includes performing site visits, identifying plants, and observing changes in cattle grazing patterns following fire. Documentation and monitoring will contribute to long-term grazing management plans.

Outreach and Education: Signs, educational and outreach materials, social media and other promotional efforts highlighting the project. Estimated up to 10 sites. UPF will host

community events promoting patch-burn-grazing, beef producers, and native prairie management.

Fencing: Permanent perimeter fencing repairs and temporary interior fencing will be funded by NDGF, and UPF will provide in-kind match. Temporary interior fencing may be necessary to exclude cattle from parts of pastures that need additional seed.

**Sustainability – 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.

This project will be sustainable in many ways:

1. It expands the ability to perform prescribed fire in private land management by directly teaching landowners and rural fire departments. Participating landowners/ranchers will burn their pastures with us for four or five years, and then will have the experience and community connections necessary to safely conduct burns without further grant funding. UPF and NDGF will work with landowners/ranchers after grant funding expires to continue patch-burn-grazing. A benefit of having grassland fire experience and equipment in a community is the increased ability to fight wildfires should they occur.
2. Local ranching will become stronger with better pastures. Demonstrations of utilizing fire in regenerative grazing will engage current and future producers, helping sustain North Dakota's ranching culture and heritage.
3. As native plant abundance increases in Grazed Wildlife Habitat pastures, they can be a viable seed source to contribute towards further pasture improvements and grassland restorations. Many native grasses and plants need fire to produce viable seeds.
4. The project builds high quality wildlife habitat without deferring grazing, paying land rent, or taking crop acres out of production.
5. Demonstrated success will likely incentivize private investment in patch-burn-grazing with funding from sources outside of the OHF.

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

If less funding is available for this project, fewer acres of at-risk native prairie will be managed with fire. Fewer landowners will be able to participate in improving grazing for their livestock if less funding is available. If fewer acres are impacted, there will be fewer benefits for local wildlife and our state bird, the western meadowlark, will continue to decline. On the other hand, increased funding would allow us to impact even more acres than proposed.

**Partnership Recognition - 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.***

Demonstration plots would be publicly accessible and all participating pastures will have a sign identifying the program and explaining patch-burn-graze management. Signs would recognize the Outdoor Heritage Fund. The OHF would also be recognized in press releases and in social media content about the project's successes.

**Awarding of Grants - Review the appropriate sample contract for your organization on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm>.**

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

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

## **ABOUT OHF:**

The purpose of the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund is to provide funding to state agencies, tribal governments, political subdivisions, and nonprofit organizations, with higher priority given to projects that enhance **conservation** practices in this state by:

**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.

## **EXEMPTIONS**

Outdoor Heritage Fund grants may not be used to finance the following:

- Litigation;
- Lobbying activities;
- Any activity that would interfere, disrupt, or prevent activities associated with surface coal mining operations; sand, gravel, or scoria extraction activities; oil and gas operations; or other energy facility or infrastructure development;
- The acquisition of land or to encumber any land for a term longer than twenty years; or
- Projects outside this state or projects that are beyond the scope of defined activities that fulfill the purposes of Chapter 54-17.8 of the North Dakota Century Code.

OHF funds may not be used, except after a finding of exceptional circumstances by the Industrial Commission, to finance:

- A completed project or project commenced before the grant application is submitted;
- A feasibility or research study;
- Maintenance costs;
- A paving project for a road or parking lot;
- A swimming pool or aquatic park;
- Personal property that is not affixed to the land;
- Playground equipment, except that grant funds may be provided for up to 25% of the cost of the equipment not exceeding \$10,000 per project and all playground equipment grants may not exceed 5% of the total grants per year (see Definitions/Clarifications for how this will be calculated);
- Staffing or outside consultants except for costs for staffing or an outside consultant to design and implement an approved project based on the documented need of the applicant and the expenditures may not exceed 5% of the grant to a grantee if the grant exceeds \$250,000 and expenditures may not exceed 10% of the grant to a grantee if the grant is \$250,000 or less (see Definitions/Clarifications for how this will be calculated);
- A building except for a building that is included as part of a comprehensive conservation plan for a new or expanded recreational project (see Definitions/Clarifications for definition of comprehensive conservation plan and new or expanded recreational project); or
- A project in which the applicant is not directly involved in the execution and completion of the project.

The goal of the Industrial Commission is that at a minimum 15% of the funding received for a biennium will be given priority for recreation projects that meet Directive D.

The following projects are not eligible for funding, unless there is a finding of exceptional circumstances by the Industrial Commission include:

- Construction or refurbishment of indoor/outdoor ice rinks,
- Construction or refurbishment of indoor/outdoor athletic courts and sports fields,
- Other substantially similar facilities.
- Infrastructure that is not part of a comprehensive conservation plan.
- Projects not meeting a minimum funding request of \$2,500.

## **Budget Information**

In-kind services used to match the request for Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars shall be valued as follows:

- Labor costs \$15.00 an hour
- Land costs Average rent costs for the county as shown in the most recent publication of the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Services, North Dakota Field Office
- Permanent Equipment Any equipment purchased must be listed separately with documentation showing actual cost. (For example: playground equipment)
- Equipment usage Actual documentation
- Seed & Seedlings Actual documentation

- Transportation Mileage at federal rate
- Supplies & materials Actual documentation

More categories will be added as we better understand the types of applications that will be submitted. We will use as our basis for these standards other State and Federal programs that have established rates. For example, the North Dakota Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program has established rates. If your project includes work that has an established rate under another State Program, please use those rates and note your source.

### **Definitions/Clarifications:**

**Building** - Defined as “A structure with a roof either with walls or without walls and is attached to the ground in a permanent nature.”

**Comprehensive Conservation Plan** - Defined as “A detailed plan that has been formally adopted by the governing board which includes goals and objectives--both short and long term, must show how this building will enhance the overall conservation goals of the project and the protection or preservation of wildlife and fish habitat or natural areas.” This does not need to be a complex multi-page document. It could be included as a part of the application or be an attachment.

**New and Expanded Recreational Project** means that the proposed building cannot be a replacement of a current building. The proposed building must also be related to either a new or expanded recreational project--either an expansion in land or an expansion of an existing building or in the opportunities for recreation at the project site.

**Playground equipment calculation** - Only the actual costs of the playground equipment (a bid or invoice showing the amount of the equipment costs must be provided) - cannot include freight or installation or surface materials or removal of old equipment, etc.

**Staffing/Outside Consultants Costs** - If you are requesting OHF funding for staffing or for an outside consultant, you must provide information in your application on the need for OHF funding to cover these costs. For example, if you are an entity that has engineering staff you must explain why you don't have sufficient staff to do the work or if specific expertise is needed or whatever the reason is for your entity to retain an outside consultant. If it is a request for reimbursement for staff time then a written explanation is required in the application of why OHF funding is needed to pay for the costs of that staff member(s)' time. **The budget form must reflect on a separate line item the specific amount that is being requested for staffing and/or the hiring of an outside consultant.** This separate line item will then be used to make the calculation of 5% or 10% as outlined in the law. Note that the calculation will be made on the grant less the costs for the consultant or staff.

**Maintenance** – Activities that preserve or keep infrastructure in a given existing condition, including repairs. Repair means to restore to sound condition after damage, to renew or refresh; except repairs due to damage caused by Acts of God.

## **Scoring of Grants**

**Oral Presentation.** Please note that you will be given an opportunity to make a ten-minute Oral Presentation at a meeting of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board. These presentations are strongly encouraged.

**Open Record.** Please note that your application and any attachments will be open records as defined by law and will be posted on the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund website.

All applications will be scored by the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board after your ten-minute oral presentation. The ranking form that will be used by the Board is available on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm> .

## **Awarding of Grants**

All decisions on requests will be reported to applicants no later than 30 days after Industrial Commission consideration. The Commission can set a limit on duration of an offer on each application or if there isn't a specific date indicated in the application for implementation of the project, then the applicant has until the next Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board regular meeting to sign the contract and get the project underway or the commitment for funding will be terminated and the applicant may resubmit for funding. Applicants whose proposals have been approved will receive a contract outlining the terms and conditions of the grant.

## **Responsibility of Recipient**

The recipient of any grant from the Industrial Commission must use the funds awarded for the specific purpose described in the grant application and in accordance with the contract. The recipient cannot use any of the funds for the purposes stated under Exemptions on the first page of this application.

If you have any questions about the application, the Commission can be reached at 701-328-3722 or [ndicgrants@nd.gov](mailto:ndicgrants@nd.gov).

Revised: November 4, 2019, April 12, 2023



April 30, 2025

United Prairie Foundation  
Mr. John Devries – President  
260 Front Street  
Sheldon, ND 58068

RE: Grazed Wildlife Habitat Program – Meadowlark Initiative

Dear Mr. Devries:

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's (Department) Meadowlark Initiative is a comprehensive, statewide effort aimed at restoring and improving native grasslands. Its vision is to foster vibrant, healthy grassland ecosystems that support biodiversity and benefit wildlife, pollinators, ranchers, and local communities. This is achieved through a multifaceted approach that includes supporting sustainable ranching practices, creating and restoring grasslands, mitigating the effects of development, highlighting societal benefits, and promoting scientific research and education.

The United Prairie Foundation's approach to its Grazed Wildlife Habitat Program strongly aligns with the goals of the Meadowlark Initiative. The Foundation has earned recognition by working closely with local communities and private landowners, utilizing forward-thinking management strategies such as patch burn grazing, offering educational outreach on the value of native grasslands, and developing native seed sources adapted to local conditions. The United Prairie Foundation remains committed to advancing the Meadowlark Initiative at the local level.

The Department is proud to support the Grazed Wildlife Habitat Program proposal and looks forward to the positive outcomes it will bring, including improved native grasslands, greater public awareness and education, and enhanced wildlife habitat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeb Williams".

Jeb Williams  
Director



MEADOWLARK  
INITIATIVE

Heather Husband  
*Meadowlark Initiative Coordinator*  
1605 E Capitol Avenue, Ste. 101  
Bismarck, ND 58501-2102  
(701) 223-8501

April 29, 2025

Karen Tyler, Executive Director  
North Dakota Industrial Commission  
ATTN: Outdoor Heritage Fund Program

RE: Grazed Wildlife Habitat – Meadowlark Initiative OHF Grant Application, United Prairie Foundation

Dear Ms Tyler,

I am writing on behalf of the North Dakota Meadowlark Initiative to express our enthusiastic support for United Prairie Foundation's North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund project proposal titled "Grazed Wildlife Habitat – Meadowlark Initiative."

The Meadowlark Initiative brings together the collective expertise of partners in conservation, agriculture, industry, and local communities to restore and enhance North Dakota's prairie grasslands. By supporting locally led partnerships and projects, the initiative helps create essential habitat for wildlife and pollinators while also promoting economic resilience for producers. We encourage organizations working towards these same goals to use the Meadowlark Initiative name as a way for the public to recognize projects as a proactive, collaborative effort to sustain our natural landscapes and working grassland heritage.

The Grazed Wildlife Habitat proposal utilizes innovative patch-burn grazing to improve pasture quality. Guided by NDSU research on this practice, the use of prescribed fire and locally harvested seed will enhance forage quality and habitat for wildlife in an area of the state that has limited programs for this type of support. Building on over 20 years of experience in engaging communities and supporting landowners, this project will equip local ranchers and rural fire departments with skills to sustain these practices into the future while increasing awareness of the many social, economic, and wildlife benefits that native grasslands provide.

Together, the United Prairie Foundation and the Meadowlark Initiative share a vision of thriving North Dakota grasslands that support biodiversity, ranching, and rural communities. The Meadowlark Initiative, therefore, fully supports the goals and commitments presented in this Outdoor Heritage Fund proposal.

Sincerely,

Heather Husband, Coordinator  
Meadowlark Initiative

# Enderlin Rural Fire Protection District, Enderlin-Sheldon Fire Department

April 29, 2025

To: North Dakota Industrial Commission

Outdoor Heritage Fund Program

600 East Boulevard Ave., Dept.405

Bismarck, ND 58505

Letter of support: United Prairie Foundation's Grazed Wildlife Habitat-Meadowlark Initiative

Dear Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board Members,

We at the Enderlin-Sheldon Fire Department want to express our support for the great cooperative efforts of wildland fire protection and wildlife habitat restoration projects between us and the United Prairie Foundation. The Enderlin-Sheldon Fire Department and the United Prairie Foundation, (UPF) have been working together since 2017 with each organization providing critical equipment and manpower to help the organizations fulfill each other's goals.

The goals of the United Prairie Foundation are to restore existing prairies back to their native vegetative state using patch-burn grazing strategies and working with local citizens to build community support and development. The two organizations working together built a new fire hall and community center in Sheldon in 2022. Bringing back plant biodiversity is important for sustaining wildlife habitat and that is important for us in rural North Dakota.

UPF has UTV's used for fire control during prescribed burns and at least one unit is stored in the Sheldon Fire Station. UPF allows the fire department to use them for wildland fires and rescue if they are available. These units literally have saved thousands of dollars in property damage and have made the job of wildland fire fighting easier and safer. The experience and knowledge myself and our firefighters have gained working with UPF has been very valuable to our fire department.

These are the reasons why we want to show our support for the United Prairie Foundation to be able to secure funding to continue with their valuable work.

Sincerely

Dan Spiekermeier

Sheldon Fire Chief, Enderlin-Sheldon Fire Department

5805 140<sup>th</sup> Ave SE

Sheldon ND 58068

701-678-5103

April 15th, 2025

Dear Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board Members,

I am writing in support of United Prairie's Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) grant. United Prairie is an outstanding organization focused on the restoration of native grasslands with years of experience and a solid reputation for quality work and execution. I have had the privilege of working with United Prairie for the last three years on the OHF funded Urban Pollinator Plots Program in Fargo.

I have been working at North Dakota State University for the last ten years with a research emphasis on grassland wildlife and cattle production. My years of research in the state have shown, unequivocally, that managing grasslands with both fire and grazing through patch-burn grazing has the greatest benefit to our native wildlife and cattle production. This approach is a win-win but lacks broadscale implementation due to logistical challenges associated with fire. Providing funding to organizations like United Prairie will help overcome the challenges private land owners face when implementing fires and will benefit both native wildlife and cattle production in the state.

North Dakota has one of the most intact and valuable natural resources left in the Great Plains, our grasslands. However, these ecosystems are under major duress as a result of woody encroachment, invasive plants, and lack of perceived value. Implementation of fire in these ecosystems is critical to maximize society's benefits from them and to help encourage support for their future conservation. Revenue generated from cattle grazing, hunting, and other outdoor activities such as birding, is a huge boom to the North Dakota economy and this project will help support all the services grasslands are able to provide.

United Prairie has the experience and capacity to restore native grasslands and promote working lands that simultaneously benefit cattle production and wildlife conservation. I am in full support of this project and I think it would be a great investment for the Outdoor Heritage Fund. Please, feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns (701-219-3086).

Thank you for your time,



Torre Hovick, Associate Professor  
Wildlife Ecologist  
North Dakota State University  
torre.hovick@ndsu.edu

**SCHOOL OF NATURAL RESOURCE SCIENCES**

NDSU Dept 7680 | PO Box 6050 | Fargo ND 58108-6050 | 701.231.7758 | Fax 701.231.7861 | [www.ndsu.edu/snrs](http://www.ndsu.edu/snrs)

Entomology  
202 Hultz Hall

Natural Resources Management  
205 Morrill Hall

Range Science  
201 Morrill Hall

Soil Science  
106 Walster Hall



April 29, 2025

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

**Letter of support: United Prairie Foundation's Grazed Wildlife Habitat – Meadowlark Initiative**

Dear Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board Members,

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the United Prairie Foundation's work in maintaining and restoring critical grassland habitat in North Dakota and the region.

I've been acquainted with John DeVries and the United Prairie Foundation for about the last 15 years. I've always been impressed by the 'can do' attitude of this small but impactful organization. The whole story of UPF is one of defining a mission and chasing it with tenacity.

Native prairie is becoming increasingly rare in the northern plains, and healthy native prairie is even more elusive. Large government and non-government agencies often dictate the 'direction' of prairie management as it is an expensive and expansive effort to ensure prairie health. However, on occasion, a local group finds a niche and can be extremely impactful, and that is the role that United Prairie Foundation has fulfilled in many ways.

I've worked with UPF at an arms-length capacity, coordinating our fire courses and offering opportunity for UPF staff to attend our courses while also encouraging the North Dakota team to replicate all or portions of our program for improved private lands fire capacity in North Dakota. In addition, I've had much communication with John over the years; sharing experiences, providing guidance, and brainstorming on effective strategies for grassland management, restoration, or preservation. Patch-burn grazing is just one of the many strategies applicable to our grasslands today, and I am happy to see pursuit of this ecological process in North Dakota.

I look forward to seeing what UPF is capable of in the future, and encourage you to consider this grant application to allow them the resources to continue their critical work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pete Bauman".

**Pete Bauman**  
SDSU Extension Range Field Specialist  
South Dakota State University Extension  
1910 W. Kemp Avenue  
Watertown, SD 57201  
pete.bauman@sdsu.edu  
(605) 882-5140

4/29/2025

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

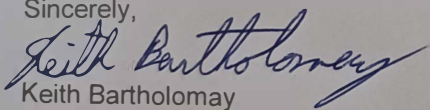
Dear Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board Members,

I fully support this project by the United Prairie Foundation (UPF). We use ecological principles to manage the grazing on our ranch east of Sheldon, ND. We have increased the diversity and resilience of our grazing lands through intensive grazing management, but I feel we are hitting a wall. Woody species are increasing, and I am reluctant to manage them with herbicides alone. I feel that fire is one natural tool that we are not using. The reasons are numerous, but the main reason we do not use fire is fear because we do not have the equipment and knowledge to use fire the right way on our grasslands. This project will help us, and many other ranchers have the confidence to use this valuable natural tool.

I have known John DeVries and his work with UPF since he started Save the Hens in Sheldon many years ago. UPF knows that properly managed private grasslands are very important for wildlife habitat. They know that having profitable, sustainable people on the land is the key to sustained wildlife conservation. They are a small regional conservation organization that gets a "big bang for their buck" and they have much respect in an increasingly larger area.

Reintroduction of fire into this ecosystem is very important to the management and sustainability of our grasslands. This project will help us get a prescriptive fire culture to help maintain and improve our very important grasslands.

Sincerely,

  
Keith Bartholomay

Bartholomay Kattle Kompany LLC.

14618 57<sup>th</sup> St. SE

Sheldon, ND 58068

Cell 701-680-0233

kbarth@mlgc.com



1665 43<sup>rd</sup> Street S Ste. 103  
Fargo ND 58103  
Phone: (701) 282- 2157 extension 3  
Fax: (701) 282-9203  
Website: [www.cassscd.org](http://www.cassscd.org)

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

Letter of Support

Dear Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board Members:

The mission of the Cass County Soil Conservation District is to inform, educate, and provide leadership in conservation and stewardship of soil, water and related natural resources. In keeping with that mission, it is important for us to partner with and support other organizations and projects that can help promote our mission.

The Fire-Patch-Burn-Grazing project, undertaken by the UPF and the ND Game and Fish, provides crucial prairie management strategies that true prairie requires. Native prairie evolved with large ungulate grazing and frequent wildfires, and the Project replicates these ancient processes on today’s landscape.

Healthy grasslands are not only important for wildlife but also for the men and women making their livings on the land. The Project will not only help establish and rejuvenate prairie stands but also increase the forage value for domestic stock. The Cass County SCD is proud to support this important project.

Director  
Cass County Soil Conservation District

DISTRICT  
SUPERVISOR:

Tyler Zimmerman  
Leonard

Warren Solberg  
Horace

Terry Hoffmann  
Wheatland

Brad Kellerman  
West Fargo

Jan Russell  
Davenport

DISTRICT STAFF

Jeff Miller  
Operations Coordinator

Amy Cole  
District Clerk

Tony Peterson  
District Technician

Eric Dahl  
319 Watershed Coordinator

Ashley Fisk  
Urban Conservationist

*Cass SCD is an equal opportunity provider and employer  
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.*



Plains Grain & Agronomy  
Enderlin, ND 58027

April 28, 2025

Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board  
North Dakota Industrial Commission  
600 East Boulevard Avenue, Dept. 405  
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Advisory Board Members,

I'm writing on behalf of Plains Grain & Agronomy here in Sheldon and Enderlin to support United Prairie Foundation's Grazed Wildlife Habitat Grant. We've worked with UPF for years and we know they have the best interests of the land and our farm communities at heart.

UPF does things the right way. They're not trying to take farmland out of production, but they work to make our existing grasslands healthier, which benefits wildlife and also gives ranchers better grazing. When grasslands are managed right, grazing becomes a real asset — and UPF understands that.

One thing they do especially well is use prescribed fire to manage the land. Fire helps knock back the invasives and freshen up the native grasses, so cattle and wildlife both have better habitat. Their partnership with the Enderlin-Sheldon Volunteer Fire Department shows they're serious about doing it safe and doing it right.

On top of all that, UPF runs the Sheldon Community Center, which has become an important place for our local events, fundraisers, and community gatherings. They're part of the backbone of this area.

We're proud to support UPF's work and hope you'll give their grant application your full consideration. They're a true partner for agriculture, conservation, and communities in North Dakota.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray', is written over a horizontal line.



Farmers Union Insurance  
1206 Main St  
Lisbon, ND, 58054

May 1, 2025

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

Dear Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board Members,

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the United Praire Foundation's work in maintaining and restoring critical grassland habitat in North Dakota and the region.

I have had the pleasure of working with United Prairie Foundation and seeing the impact they have on our region and local communities they serve. From seeing their controlled burns and habitat restoration, to them assisting our local fire departments with equipment and expertise, the United Prairie Foundation has a unique ability to restoring, preserving and keeping our grasslands which are critical for wildlife habitat.

As a partner in my family farm operation, we have native grasslands which have benefited from the expertise, information and education that we have taken from United Prairie Foundations work within our region and communities. They are a valuable asset and provide a unique resource that many in our region, including our family farm & ranch benefit from. The United Praire Foundations work will help our grasslands and habitat they provide for decades and centuries to come.

I'm excited for the future of our rural communities and the grasslands that we have in our region. Having the assistance & expertise the United Prairie Foundation provides has a great impact in our region.

Sincerely,

Lance Gulleeson



*Browning's Honey Co., Inc.*

3270 86<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE  
Jamestown, ND 58402  
701-252-9033  
701-252-1238(fax)

April 30, 2025

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

RE: United Prairie Foundation (UPF) Grazed Wildlife Habitat –  
Meadowlark Initiative

Dear Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board Members,

My name is Zac Browning. I am a 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Commercial Beekeeper and Owner of Browning's Honey Company in Jamestown, ND. My business, which employs about 50 people and produces several million pounds of North Dakota Honey each year, depends on healthy and diverse habitat from the landscape across the North Dakota Prairie. For decades we have been losing the biodiversity that has made North Dakota the top honey producing state. Our hives now produce only 50% of the honey that they made just 20 years ago on a per hive basis. More importantly, our hives are dying each year at alarming rates. Just this past year, over 60% of commercial honeybee hives were lost. These losses are not sustainable and if this trend continues, it will continue to impact the pollination services that are performed by honeybees on many crops. It is for these reasons that I have invested my own time, money, and even my own acres in efforts like UPF. In 2017 I co-founded a North Dakota Nonprofit called The Bee and Butterfly Habitat Fund, where I currently serve that board as Chair. Like UPF, BBHF is committed to making every acre of potential habitat the very best it can be. Whether we're talking about cattle grazing,

honeybee forage, wildlife habitat, weed management, soil health, or clean water, restoring natural biodiversity through the use of tools like prescribed fire is one of the most effective ways of meeting land use and conservation goals.

UPF provides real and appreciable value to working lands and wildlife habitat here in North Dakota. I have seen this work and can attest to its effectiveness.

I urge the board to recommend funding this program.

Sincerely,

Zac Browning

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zac Browning', written in a cursive style.

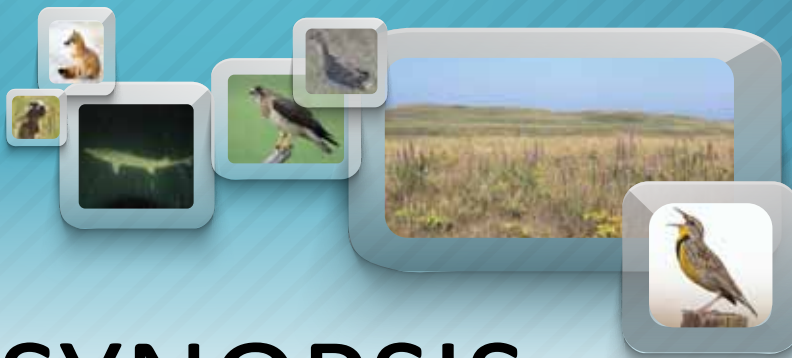
President, Browning's Honey Co  
Chair, The Bee and Butterfly Habitat Fund

# NORTH DAKOTA STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

2015

## SYNOPSIS

February 2016



This is a summary of the 2015 North Dakota State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The SWAP is a comprehensive document and this synopsis should not be used to replace the SWAP.

### **WHAT IS NORTH DAKOTA'S STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN?**

The 2015 North Dakota State Wildlife Action Plan replaces the 2005 North Dakota Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy as the principle document for safeguarding rare and declining fish and wildlife species in North Dakota. This newer second "edition" not only has a different name, but has been revised to include new information generated by State Wildlife Grant (SWG) studies conducted over the past 10 years. Examples include, but are not limited to, changes to the species of conservation priority list, focus areas, range/distribution maps, threats and management actions.

The SWAP is built upon eight essential elements, with an overall focus on the "species of greatest conservation need," or as we have labeled them, "species of conservation priority." The eight elements include: (1) information on the distribution and abundance of wildlife species, including low and declining populations; (2) descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types; (3) problems affecting species and priority research or survey efforts needed; (4) conservation actions needed to conserve the identified

species; (5) plans for monitoring species and the effectiveness of conservation actions; (6) plans for reviewing the plan; (7) coordinating with federal, state and local agencies and Tribal government on the development and implementation of the plan; (8) and involve broad public participation.

The number of species of conservation priority increased from 100 under the old plan to 115 in the current SWAP. While 20 new species were added to the list, five species were removed. The current list includes 47 birds, two amphibians, nine reptiles, 21 mammals, 22 fish, 10 freshwater mussels and four insects. It is important to recognize that species of conservation priority often depend on several habitat types or landscape components for survival. The key to ensuring their long-term survival is to maintain diverse grasslands, wetlands, woodlands, rivers and streams. These habitats cannot be reduced to certain isolated areas, but must occur over a broad landscape.

Completion of the SWAP marks the 10-year anniversary of the first dedicated program for rare and declining fish and wildlife species in North Dakota. Although substantial progress was made in the past decade, considerable work remains. As North Dakota is experiencing widespread habitat threats and challenges, the SWAP will serve as an important tool in dealing with these issues.

Furthermore, preventing species

from becoming listed as federally threatened or endangered is important. A listing has the potential to influence how public and private land is managed and used. The cost of protection or restoration of a listed species is far greater than preventing its decline in the first place. From an ecological perspective, loss of a seemingly insignificant species can cause other animals to decline, or vanish. Such declines are hard to predict as many relationships are not yet well understood. Even so, animals that live in North Dakota are part of the state's legacy, and many people believe the demise of any species is tragic.

### **SPECIES OF CONSERVATION PRIORITY**

Once a species was designated as a SCP they were placed in one of three Levels. The levels were designated as a way to prioritize funding for SWG projects. The levels are defined as follows:

- **Level I:** Species in decline and receive little or no monetary support or conservation efforts. North Dakota Game and Fish Department has a clear obligation to use SWG funding to implement conservation actions that directly benefit these species. Level I species are those having a:
  - high level of conservation priority because of declining status either here or across their range –OR–
  - high rate of occurrence in North Dakota constituting the core of the species breeding range (i.e. "responsibility" species), but are at-risk range wide

– **Level II:** North Dakota Game and Fish Department will use SWG funding to implement conservation actions to benefit these species if SWG funding for Level I species is sufficient or conservation needs have been met. Level II species are those having a:

- moderate level of conservation priority –OR–
- high level of conservation priority, but a substantial level of non-SWG funding is available to them
- **Level III:** North Dakota’s species having a moderate level of conservation priority, but are believed to be

peripheral or nonbreeding in North Dakota.

The important message to remember is regardless of level assignment, all species on the list are of concern for various reasons and there is an urgency to sustain them on North Dakota’s landscape.



*Chestnut-collared longspur*



*Short-horned lizard*



*Monarch butterfly*

BIRDS	LEVEL	BIRDS (con't.)	LEVEL	INSECTS	LEVEL
American Avocet	II	Upland Sandpiper	II	Dakota Skipper	II
American Bittern	I	Western Meadowlark	II	Poweshiek Skipperling	II
American Kestrel	II	Whooping Crane	III	Monarch Butterfly	I
American White Pelican	II	Willet	II	Regal Fritillary	I
Baird’s Sparrow	I	Wilson’s Phalarope	I	<b>FISH</b>	
Bald Eagle	II	Yellow Rail	I	Blacknose Shiner	III
Black Tern	I	<b>AMPHIBIANS</b>		Blue Sucker	I
Black-billed Cuckoo	I	Canadian Toad	I	Burbot	II
Bobolink	II	Plains Spadefoot	I	Carmine Shiner	III
Brewer’s Sparrow	III	<b>REPTILES</b>		Chestnut Lamprey	III
Burrowing Owl	II	False Map Turtle	III	Finescale Dace	III
Canvasback	II	Northern Prairie Skink	III	Flathead Chub	II
Chestnut-collared Longspur	I	Plains Hog-nosed Snake	I	Hornyhead Chub	III
Dickcissel	II	Sagebrush Lizard	III	Largescale Stoneroller	III
Ferruginous Hawk	I	Short-horned Lizard	II	Logperch	III
Franklin’s Gull	I	Smooth Green Snake	I	Northern Pearl Dace	I
Golden Eagle	II	Smooth Softshell	III	Northern Redbelly Dace	II
Grasshopper Sparrow	I	Snapping Turtle	II	Paddlefish	II
Greater Prairie Chicken	II	Spiny Softshell	III	Pallid Sturgeon	II
Greater Sage-grouse	I	<b>MAMMALS</b>		Pugnose Shiner	III
Horned Grebe	I	American Marten	II	River Darter	III
Lark Bunting	I	Arctic Shrew	III	Sicklefin Chub	I
Le Conte’s Sparrow	II	Big Brown Bat	I	Silver Chub	II
Least Tern (Interior)	II	Black-footed Ferret	II	Silver Lamprey	III
Lesser Scaup	II	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	I	Sturgeon Chub	I
Loggerhead Shrike	II	Eastern Spotted Skunk	III	Trout-perch	II
Long-billed Curlew	I	Gray Fox	III	Yellow Bullhead	III
Marbled Godwit	I	Hispid Pocket Mouse	III	<b>MUSSELS</b>	
McCown’s Longspur	III	Little Brown Bat	I	Black Sandshell	II
Nelson’s Sparrow	I	Long-eared Bat	III	Creek Heelsplitter	I
Northern Harrier	II	Long-legged Bat	III	Creeper	III
Northern Pintail	II	Merriam’s Shrew	III	Deertoe	III
Peregrine Falcon	III	Northern Long-eared Bat	I	Fragile Papershell	III
Piping Plover	II	Plains Pocket Mouse	III	Mapleleaf	III
Prairie Falcon	II	Pygmy Shrew	II	Pink Heelsplitter	II
Red-headed Woodpecker	I	Richardson’s Ground Squirrel	II	Pink Papershell	I
Red Knot (Rufa)	III	River Otter	II	Threeridge	II
Sharp-tailed Grouse	II	Sagebrush Vole	III	Wabash Pigtoe	II
Short-eared Owl	II	Swift Fox	II		
Sprague’s Pipit	I	Townsend’s Big-eared Bat	I		
Swainson’s Hawk	I	Western Small-footed Bat	III		

## HABITAT

North Dakota's natural habitat was predominantly prairie. Over the past 150-plus years, the landscape has changed dramatically. Although tracts of native prairie still exist in many areas, they are traversed by a road nearly every mile. It is estimated that more than 50 percent of the prairie and wetlands have been plowed or drained. Numerous tree shelterbelts were planted to help reduce erosion and protect farmsteads, which provides habitat for some species, but may interfere with the lifecycle of others, such as grassland nesting birds. Several large reservoirs were constructed, including Lake Sakakawea, which altered the natural flooding cycle of the Missouri River, North Dakota's largest riparian system. The landscape described by many early explorers and pioneers has changed considerably. North Dakota is not the vast expanse of treeless prairie it once was. There is, however, great potential to protect, conserve and enhance what remains and restore what was lost.



Missouri River

Nine landscape components encompassing the major habitat types of North Dakota were identified in the SWAP. There are a variety of grassland habitat types, including native or uncultivated land, and planted grasslands. The major grassland landscape components are **Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)**, **Eastern Mixed-grass Prairie (Drift Prairie)**, **Mixed-grass Prairie (Missouri Coteau)**, and **Western Mixed-grass/Short-grass Prairie (Missouri Slope)**. In addition, **Planted or Tame Grassland**, has been identified as a major grassland landscape component. These grasslands are located across

the state. The other major landscape components are **Wetlands and Lakes; Rivers, Streams and Riparian; Badlands; and Upland Forest**.



Missouri Coteau



Badlands

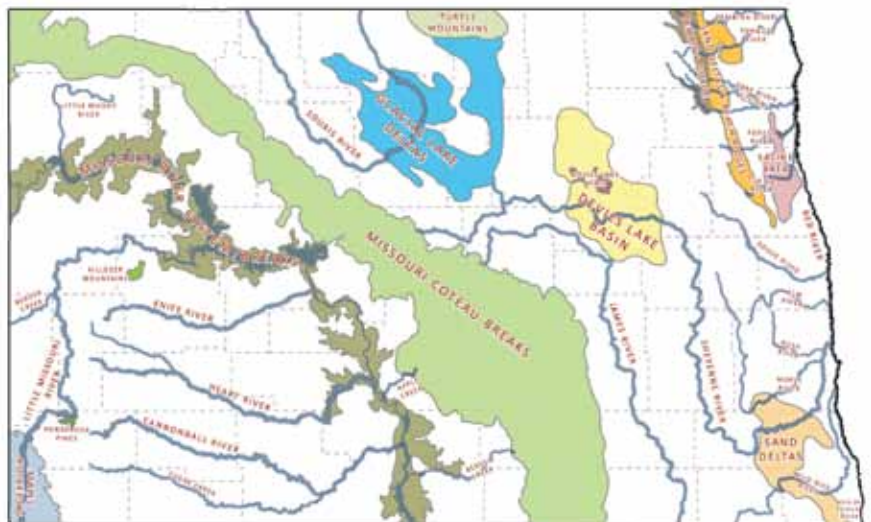


Riparian

In some cases there was sufficient information or reason to identify focus areas within a particular landscape component. Focus areas typically exhibited unique or easily identifiable differences in vegetation, soils, topography, hydrology or land use. Focus areas are highly variable in size and often represent an area of native vegetation or a natural community type rare to North Dakota. A total of 21 focus areas were identified. Note that no specific focus areas were identified within the wetlands and lakes and badlands landscapes, but that does not imply these are not important habitats. More than one million wetlands are scattered across North Dakota and all wetland types are important for wildlife and hydrophyte plants, water storage and water quality. Wetlands are included as a key component within identified focus areas.

## CONSERVATION ACTIONS

There are various reasons why a particular species may be declining or at-risk. Threats impacting species are wide-ranging, including but not limited to direct conversion of habitat (e.g. from urban, cropland, or energy development), invasive or detrimental plants and noxious weeds, fire or fire suppression, wetland consolidation, or even anthropomorphic related, such as noise and light pollution. The SWAP provides detailed description of threats and conservation



Focus areas

actions for each of the major landscape components and species specific management recommendations. The focus must remain on solutions to preventing species from becoming federally threatened or endangered. There are five recurrent conservation actions identified throughout all major landscape components that will make this happen.

**1. Offer incentives and programs to protect, enhance, and restore habitat.**

The majority of land in North Dakota is held in private ownership. There are numerous federal, state and local programs to provide landowners, with cost-sharing assistance to protect, enhance and restore wildlife habitat. This is the primary mechanism for ensuring long-term conservation of SCP and other wildlife in North Dakota. North Dakota Game and Fish Department staff will work with partners to ensure programs are fully encompassing the needs to conserve SCP and expand programs where necessary, particularly farm bill programs, such as the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and pollinator habitat programs.

**2. Urge ecologically responsible ordinances and suitable reclamation standards.**

Increasing demand for urban, energy and utility development is heightening the need to minimize impacts to SCP and other wildlife. Although environmental review is provided by federal and state agencies, the recommendations are often unheeded. Ecologically sound ordinances and reclamation standards must be strengthened and utilized.



**3. Promote and support holistic grazing and work with grass-based agricultural groups.**

The majority of the SCP are grassland dependent. The key to maintaining grassland as an integral part of the North Dakota landscape is to ensure grassland ranching persists. Furthermore, prairies evolved with grazing by large ungulates and cattle grazing is a beneficial tool to maintain native vegetation, particularly if applied in a holistic manner.



**4. Use best management practices or ecological site descriptions.**

Experts in various fields have developed best management practices for a particular habitat component. The Natural Resources Conservation Services has developed ecological site descriptions, which describe the composition and ecological

function of a historic plant community, and use a state and transition model to help managers understand



how plant communities will respond to changes in management. These valuable tools should be employed when restoring or managing native communities. Additionally, managers should consider implications of climate change when planning and implementing a management practice.

**5. Public education and outreach.**

The key to successful implementation of wildlife conservation for public use and enjoyment depends upon their awareness, understanding and appreciation of these resources. Ecological services provide values to the public that they are likely unaware of in their daily lives.

**Where to find more information...**

**NORTH DAKOTA STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN**

<http://gf.nd.gov/wildlife/swap>

**SPECIES OF CONSERVATION PRIORITY**

<http://gf.nd.gov/wildlife/scp>

**NORTH DAKOTA STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS**

<http://gf.nd.gov/wildlife/swg>

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# MEADOWLARK INITIATIVE



## WHAT'S BEEN LOST



Has been converted.

**ONLY  
1 OUT OF 3  
FARMS  
PRODUCE  
CATTLE**



Only two of five farms produced cattle in 2002 in North Dakota; in 2017, just one of every three farms produced cattle.

**1.3% decline  
OF MEADOWLARCS  
PER YEAR**



53% population loss in grassland birds since 1970 (approximately 720 million birds).



Of the nearly 5 million natural wetland acres, 60% have been converted or lost.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE



**1 in 4**  
bumble  
bee  
species  
at risk



**LOSS OF  
RANCHING HERITAGE**



**50%**  
Meadowlarks  
gone in the  
next 45 years

## HOW CAN THE MEADOWLARK INITIATIVE HELP

### STABLE WILDLIFE AND POLLINATOR POPULATIONS

Healthy Land, Water and Community



**MEADOWLARK  
INITIATIVE**

<https://gf.nd.gov/meadowlark-initiative>