

Wetland and Grassland Restoration

Name of Organization: North Dakota Natural Resources Trust

Federal Tax ID#: 36-3512179

Contact Person/Title: Terry Allbee

Address: 1605 E. Capitol Ave., Ste. 101

City: Bismarck

State: North Dakota

Zip Code: 58501-2102

E-mail Address: terry@naturalresourcestrust.com

Web Site Address: www.ndnrt.com

Phone: 701-223-8501

Fax #: 701-223-6937

MAJOR Directive:

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

Directive B. Improve, maintain, and restore water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and to support other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

Directive C. Develop, enhance, conserve, and restore wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

Directive D. Conserve natural areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

Additional Directive:

- Directive A.** Provide access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;
- Directive B.** Improve, maintain, and restore water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and to support other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;
- Directive C.** Develop, enhance, conserve, and restore wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and
- Directive D.** Conserve natural areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

Type of organization:

- State Agency
- Political Subdivision
- Tribal Entity
- Tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation, as described in United States Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. § 501 (c))

Project Name: Water Storage and Grass Seeding

Abstract/Executive Summary

The foundation for many of North Dakota game and non-game wildlife species is the presence of water and grass available to complete their life cycles. The North Dakota Natural Resources Trust (Trust) has been involved in voluntary, private land projects involving wetlands and associated grasslands since the organization was established in 1986. Private landowners have a strong interest in partnering with the Trust to increase their natural resources, diversify their operations, and improve agricultural stewardship. The Trust would like to promote, through this Outdoor Heritage Grant, the restoration of wetlands and grasslands. The Trust is building upon a previously successful Outdoor Heritage Fund grant titled "Water Storage Piggyback".

The Water Storage Piggyback (Piggyback) program provided a partnership with local, state, federal and nongovernmental organizations to restore, create, and enhance wetlands and other water storage areas. The partnering organization provided cost-share to complete the necessary construction and technical assistance. The Piggyback program provided an upfront incentive to off-set agricultural production loss by reducing landowner risk and incentivizing participation. The Piggyback program has allocated the entire grant and match funds. All grant funds will be finalized by end of 2017. The Piggyback program was very well received by landowners and the Trust would like to continue an incentive-based water storage program with the assistance from Outdoor

Heritage Funds. In addition to the water storage, landowner interest in grass seeding has increased dramatically in the last several years.

The Wetland and Grassland Restoration (WGR) grant proposal would assist landowners with the combination of both a one-time water storage incentive and assist with cost-share for seeding cropland acres to grass. The proposal will partner with landowners to prioritize acres that have the characteristic of annual agricultural cropping inputs with low or no crop productivity. By targeting lower productive areas the WGP will not only be valuable for wildlife species, but will help the landowner's financial bottom-line. The goal of WGR is to work with landowners to restore 700 surface acres of wetlands and to seed 1,125 acres to grass.

Amount of Grant request \$292,500.00

Total Project Costs \$500,000.00

Amount of Matching Funds \$207,500.00 (41%)

Cash - \$141,875

In-kind - \$65,625

Source(s) of Matching Funds

NDNRT - \$156,875

Landowners - \$50,625

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 on Page 1 of this application.

Narrative

Organization Information:

The North Dakota Natural Resources Trust was created in 1986 and was originally called the North Dakota Wetlands Trust until 2000. The Trust's mission is to preserve, restore, manage, and enhance wetlands and associated wildlife habitat, grasslands, and riparian areas in the state of North Dakota. The Trust achieves this mission by partnering with agricultural and conservation organizations to: 1) promote the productive use of private agricultural lands private property rights that result in the enhancement and protection of private lands; 2) effectively use North Dakota's public lands both for agriculture and recreation; 3) promote good land use planning along urban river corridors, and 4) enhance the state's significant water resources. The Trust helps shape the landscape through its programs and does its best to help shape both public attitude and public policy to support natural resource protection.

The Trust is managed by a six-member Board of Directors. Three of the Directors are appointed by the governor of North Dakota, one by the National Audubon Society, one by the National Wildlife Federation, and one by the North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department director is an ex-officio member. The Trust has an Executive Director, three full-time staff and one part-time staff person.

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, its goal is to identify common issues, create dialogue, and resolve conflicts.

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. Please 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. If your project includes tree/shrub/grass planting, please 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. If your project includes Section 319 program funding, please provide, in detail, the specific best management practices that will be implemented and the specific projects for which you are seeking funding. Please note that 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.

The 2015 North Dakota State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) has eight elements that 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 2015 SWAP increased the number of species of conservation priority to 115. 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.

The 2015 SWAP prioritizes conservation actions to assist the wildlife species with habitat for increasing their populations. **The number one conservation action plan is to offer incentives and programs to protect, enhance, and restore habitat.** The WGP goal is to do just that.

Project Goals, Strategies and Benefits: The goal of WGR program is to restore approximately 700 surface acres of wetlands and 1,125 acres of grass throughout the state of North Dakota. The WGR program will provide landowners a financial tool to offset the loss of agricultural production. This incentive will increase water storage and encourage landowner enrollment. In addition, the WGP will provide cost-share on purchasing grass seed for landowners. The program will be offered to landowners to store additional water on their land and seed cropland acres to grassland. Storing water means to the Trust that a structure (typically earthen) will be constructed to complete the water storage by restoration, creation, and/or enhancement.

This proposal provides an innovative way to bring diverse groups together to partner on natural resources restoration and provide landowners with just compensation for their decisions. Another innovative aspect of this proposal is the ability of landowners to layer multiple programs to achieve the desired outcome. This layering of the WGR program is will be very complementary to the other programs and will be done in a way that is not excessively burdensome or complex for landowners.

The WGR program addresses OHF directive C that will develop, enhance, conserve, and restore wildlife habitat on private lands. It also addresses directive B by supporting agricultural stewardship and improving water quality. The WGR program will allow for grazing and haying on the restored acres, which will be beneficial to livestock producers.

All grass seeding will adhere to USDA-NRCS planting specifications and/or other federal and state planting designs. The grass seed should be seeded with a correct calibration seed drill and/or broadcast and harrowed into the soil. Likely a lot of grass seed will be planted with airseeder, which tend to drill deeper hurting germination. We will encourage the use of no-till grass drills when possible. A combination of warm and cool season grass will be obtained from a reputable seed dealer with weed-free assurance.

All participating landowners will be informed about public access opportunities. All public access agreement would be through the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's PLOTS program.

Timetable for implementation: The WGR program outreach and education will start immediately after the grant is approved. The Trust will meet individually and/or collectively with groups to inform partner organizations who deliver water storage programs in North Dakota of the availability and details of the WGR program. The outreach and coordination activity will be the focus for the first year, but will be on-going throughout the grant period.

The WGR program will be open continuously to landowners, until all funds have been committed. The Trust will manage and monitor the committed funds and completed projects. Wetland restoration and grass seeding are dependent on weather conditions and the availability of contractors. The timeframe to seed grass can be very short depending on weather conditions during the appropriate seeding times. Because of these factors the estimated total timeframe for grant completion will be 3 to 5 years. The Trust will coordinate with our partners to monitor and report progress.

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.

The Trust will oversee and coordinate all activities associated with the Wetland and Grassland Restoration proposal. The WGR will be offered throughout the entire state of North Dakota. Promotion and information coordination with partners will be a high priority. After the promotion and outreach, the Trust will develop site specific agreements with landowners which will include a map defining boundaries, the payments amount, the responsibility of each landowner and the Trust, and buyback options. All agreements will be signed and dated by the landowner and the Trust.

The Trust's staff will coordinate the WGR program from our office located in Bismarck, ND. Terry Allbee, Biologist/Business Manager and Jesse Beckers, Conservation Program Coordinator, will provide all the WGR program coordination. The Trust will coordinate with existing conservation partners to ensure that funds are spent effectively. The Trust will provide tracking and reporting of all participant agreements following grant guidelines.

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

How will you tell if the project is successful? 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.

Based on the previously awarded Water Storage Piggyback grant the Trust is very confident in its ability to complete all wetland and grassland restoration activities within 5 years. The Piggyback grant had all of the allocated \$375,000 obligated within two years after the grant approved and plans to complete the project by end of 2017. There is just over \$22,000 remaining. The Piggyback program worked with 44 different landowners to store over 560 surface acre of water.

Evaluation success of the WGR program is directly related to landowner's enrollment into the program. High landowner interest is the key to the WGR program success. The acreage goal can only be achieved by the willingness of landowners to enroll into the WGR program and cooperative partner's water storage programs.

The Trust will monitor all WGR program agreements. Evaluations and progress reports will be completed. The Trust's programs are structured to be flexible and accommodating to agreement participants. Maintaining good communication with agreement participants and the partners is very important to the Trust.

Budget:

Project Expense	OHF Request	Applicant's Match Share (Cash)	Applicant's Match Share (In-Kind)	Landowner Match Share (In-Kind)	Total Each Project Expense
Wetland Incentive	\$225,000	\$125,000	\$10,000	\$	\$360,000
Grass Seeding	\$ 67,500	\$16,875	\$5,000	\$50,625	\$140,000
Total Costs	\$292,500	\$141,875	\$15,000	\$50,625	\$500,000

Budget narrative

Water Restoration Incentive – The one-time incentive payment will range from \$202.40 to \$592.40 per acre depending on the county in which the project is located. The Trust will use the 2017 County Rents and Values North Dakota provided by North Dakota Department of Trust Lands to determine the incentive payment. The wetland restoration incentive payment will be 40% of the average non-irrigated cropland value. All agreements will be for a ten-years. In North Dakota these values range from \$506 in Williams County to \$1,481 in Sargent County. For budgeting purposes the Trust used an average value of \$500 per acre.

Grass Restoration – Cost-share is based on seeding costs per acre of \$120, which includes \$75 per acre for native grass seed (OHF \$60 per acre and Trust \$15 per acre) and \$45 per acre in landowner match for seeding and establishment management.

Staff/Delivery – This includes actual staff salary, benefits, travel, and overhead to deliver the WGR program. Activities include program promotion and outreach, meeting with landowners, partnering with state, federal, local, and nongovernmental organizations, processing payments, and agreement monitoring.

X I certify that a project budget will be sent to the Commission

Sustainability – Indicate how the project will be funded or sustained in future years.

Include information on the sustainability of this project after all the funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund has been expended and whether the sustainability will be in the form of ongoing management or additional funding from a different source.

The WGR will offer landowners a voluntary, private lands program that will focus on increasing agricultural productivity and increase habitat for wildlife populations. It is our vision in this proposal that landowners will restore wetlands and grasslands that will

help their financial bottom line and will be retained long after the WGP agreement has ended.

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

The Trust thanks the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board for considering our WGR proposal. The request is for \$292,500 of OHF funds for WGR program agreements, with \$207,500 in Trust and landowner match. If OHF recommends a reduction in funding from the original proposal, this will result in a lower number of agreements with landowners, less number of acres achieved, and a reduction in the amount of match available by the Trust and landowners.

Partnership Recognition - If you are a successful recipient of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars, how would you recognize the Outdoor Heritage Fund partnership? * Please note it is a requirement that there be signage at the location of the project acknowledging the funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund if appropriate for your project.

This WRG will provide Outdoor Heritage Fund recognition on all agreements with landowners, on any signs placed at project locations, and in all presentation or discussions with partners.

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.