

Contract No. 001-017

“North Dakota Game and Fish Department Outdoor Heritage Habitat Initiative”

Submitted by North Dakota Game and Fish

Principal Investigator: Kevin Kading

Directives A, B, C & D

PARTICIPANTS

Sponsor	Cost Share	
ND Game & Fish Dept.	\$600,000	
Unknown (reduced funding)	<u>\$100,000</u>	
Subtotal Cash Cost Share		\$700,000
ND Game and Fish	\$133,000 (indirect)	
Subtotal Indirect Cost Share		\$133,000
North Dakota Industrial Commission	<u>\$1,900,000</u>	
Total Project Cost	\$2,733,000	

Project Schedule – 10 years
Contract Date – 5/30/2014
Start Date – 6/2/2014
Completion Date – 11/30/2023

Project Deliverables:
Status Report: November 30, 2014 ✓
Status Report: November 30, 2015 ✓
Status Report: November 30, 2016 ✓
Status Report: November 30, 2017 ✓
Status Report: November 30, 2018 ✓
Status Report: November 30, 2019 ✓
Status Report: November 30, 2020 ✓
Status Report: November 30, 2021 ✓
Status Report: November 30, 2022
Final Report: November 30, 2023

OBJECTIVE/STATEMENT OF WORK:

Assist the North Dakota Game and Fish Department in fulfilling its mission by protecting, conserving and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat on private lands through the Private Land Open To Sportsmen (PLOTS) and Save Our Lakes (SOL) programs. Impact of this funding will be 4,500 acres - 3,000 PLOTS & 1,600 SOL

The Outdoor Heritage Habitat Initiative will do the following:

- Maintain North Dakota’s hunting heritage by providing producers with options to develop habitat on their land and make improvements to their operations
- Maintain North Dakota’s hunting heritage by increasing wildlife habitat and public access for hunting by enrolling 3,000 acres of new and existing habitat into the PLOTS program.
- Maintain North Dakota’s important recreational fisheries by improving water quality through the enhancement of 1,600 acres of shoreline, riparian areas, grassed waterways and other habitat into the SOL program.
- Provide alternative income source for agricultural producers interested in developing wildlife habitat, improving their operation and providing public access.
- Provide recreational opportunities for resident and non-resident hunters and anglers.
- Provide an important forage reserve for cattle producers

STATUS:

Original request was for \$2,000,000. Amount awarded was \$1,900,000. Applicant has indicated that the funding has been allocated with \$400,000 used for SOL and \$1,500,000 used for PLOTS. Contract has been signed.

11/30/2014 - The initial proposal indicated that SOL agreements would be between 10 and 20 years and PLOTS agreements would be for 10 years. SOL payments would be made one-time, upfront, while PLOTS payments would be made annually. The only deviation from the original proposal included a slight adjustment to allow a range of 6-10 years for PLOTS agreements to better fit the needs and interests of producers.

Save Our Lakes - Eight SOL agreements total 597.66 acres were secured in Emmons, Logan, Morton, Grant and Dickey Counties. Seven of these agreements are for ten years, one is for 20 years; payments were issued one-time upfront, for land rental only. OHF funds were used to provide 75 percent of the land rental payment, while SOL funds provided the remaining 25 percent of the payment. Other non-OHF SOL funds were used to install infrastructure such as fencing and wells and to plant grass on or adjacent to these areas. The main objective of these agreements is to manage riparian systems and important watersheds through an array of practices and methods including managed grazing and/or haying; i.e. reducing the duration, frequency and intensity of grazing or haying along the riparian systems.

PLOTS - Eleven agreements totaling 3,041 acres were secured in Ransom, LaMoure and Dickey Counties. The \$1.5 million PLOTS allocation is fully obligated within these agreements. Five of these agreements are 10 years in length; the remaining agreements are 6 years in length. The agreements were all initiated in 2014 but no OHF rental payment was made in 2014; only an access payment was made in 2014 using non-OHF PLOTS funds. Beginning in 2015, the agreements will receive annual rental payments to be expended from OHF funds. Payments will be made annually in March through the life of the agreement. Many of the agreements contain expiring CRP that was in its final year of contract with USDA; OHF funds provide an annual rental payment to maintain these acres as wildlife habitat and to retain soil and water quality benefits achieved while enrolled in CRP. Through the OHF/PLOTS agreement, uses such as haying and/or grazing are allowed as per a management plan. This is a feature of the PLOTS program that is very well received by producers. In addition to rental payments, OHF funds will be used to provide cost share for seeding 382.8 acres to native grass and another 5.1 acres into a high diversity pollinator planting. Another agreement will be seeding between 70-107 acres of grass depending upon conditions in spring 2015. Finally, another agreement will be seeding between 60-220 acres of grass depending upon conditions in spring 2015.

The agreement between NDGF and the NDIC was not fully executed until June 2014. The Department was concerned that we missed the peak of the field season and that many producers already had made plans for the year. While we did miss out on the window to plant grass for 2014, there was tremendous interest in both the SOL and PLOTS OHF funds. With very little promotion, simply word of mouth between private landowners, networks through county USDA offices and other conservation partners and a few mailings, the \$1.5 million of PLOTS OHF funds was fully obligated in agreements in the months of July and August. SOL had similar success and expended \$200,000 of the \$400,000 in less than one month. It is expected that the remaining SOL funds will be obligated during the next reporting period.

11/30/2015 - Status Report received. The report states:

The \$1.9 million grant was divided out between the Save Our Lakes (SOL) program and the PLOTS program. \$1.5 million was allocated to PLOTS, while the remaining \$400,000 was allocated to SOL. The initial proposal indicated that SOL agreements would be between 10 and 20 years and PLOTS

agreements would be for 10 years. SOL payments would be made one-time, upfront, while PLOTS payments would be made annually. The only deviation from the original proposal included a slight adjustment to allow a range of 6-10 years for PLOTS agreements to better fit the needs and interests of producers.

Save Our Lakes

11 SOL agreements totaling 496.85 acres were secured in Emmons, Stutsman, Morton and Pembina Counties. Four of these agreements are for 10 years and 7 are for 15 years; payments were issued one-time upfront, for land rental only. OHF funds were used to provide 75% of the land rental payment, while SOL funds provided the remaining 25% of the payment. Other non-OHF, SOL funds were used to install infrastructure such as fencing and wells and to plant grass on or adjacent to these areas. The main objective of these agreements is to manage riparian systems and important watersheds through an array of practices and methods including managed grazing and/or haying; i.e. reducing the duration, frequency and intensity of grazing or haying along the riparian systems.

PLOTS

11 agreements totaling 3,041 acres were secured in Ransom, LaMoure and Dickey Counties. Five of these agreements are 10 years in length; the remaining agreements are 6 years in length. The agreements were all initiated in 2014 but there were no OHF rental payments made in 2014; only an access payment was made in 2014 using non-OHF, PLOTS funds.

Beginning in March 2015 annual payments were made with funds made available through this grant; payments will continue to be made annually through the life of the agreements. Many of the agreements contain expiring CRP that was in its final year of contract with USDA; OHF funds provide an annual rental payment to maintain these acres as wildlife habitat and to retain soil and water quality benefits achieved while enrolled in CRP. Other agreements contain newly established habitat. Through the OHF/PLOTS agreement, uses such as haying and/or grazing are allowed as per a management plan. This is a feature of the PLOTS program that is very well received by producers. These acres are all signed with Department PLOTS signs as well as a sign indicating funding was provided through OHF. The areas are available for walk-in public access and are displayed in the Department's annually published Conservation PLOTS guide. They can also be viewed on the Department's interactive map service and available for GPS download or use on smart phone apps.

11/30/16 - Status Report received. The report states:

The \$1.9M grant was divided out between the Save Our Lakes (SOL) program and the PLOTS program. \$1.5M was allocated to PLOTS, while the remaining 400,000 was allocated to SOL. The initial proposal indicated that SOL agreements would be between 10 and 20 years and PLOTS agreements would be for 10 years. SOL payments would be made one-time, upfront, while PLOTS payments would be made annually. The only deviation from the original proposal included a slight adjustment to allow a range of 6-10 years for PLOTS agreements to better fit the needs and interests of producers.

Save Our Lakes

No additional agreements were signed during this reporting period. The \$400,000 OHF allocated to SOL has been fully expended on 19 agreements totaling 1,101.40 acres. OHF funds were used to provide 75 percent of the land rental payment, while SOL funds provided the remaining 25 percent of the payment. Payments were made as a one-time, lump sum. Other non-OHF, SOL funds were used to install infrastructure such as fencing and wells and to plant grass on or adjacent to these areas. The main objective of these agreements is to manage riparian systems and important watersheds through and

array of practices and methods including managed grazing and/or haying; i.e. reducing the duration, frequency and intensity of grazing or haying along the riparian systems. Annual monitoring has been completed on these agreements.

PLOTS

No additional agreements were signed during this reporting period. 11 agreements totaling 3,041 acres have been signed in Ransom, Lamoure and Dickey counties. Annual payments were made in March 2016 with funds made available through this grant. Annual monitoring has been completed on these agreements.

These acres are all signed with Department PLOTS signs as well as a sign indicated funding was provided through OHF. The areas are available for walk-in public access and are displayed in the Department's annually published Conservation PLOTS guide. They can also be viewed on the Department's interactive map service and available for GPS download or use on smart phone apps.

11/30/17 - Status report received. The report states the same as the previous year noting that annual monitoring has been completed on both the Save Our Lakes and PLOTS agreements. It was noted that in regards to the annual monitoring on the PLOTS agreements that no agreements were out of compliance. Seven agreements had managed haying completed on approximately 720 acres in 2017.

11/30/18 – Status report received. The report states that no additional agreements were signed during this reporting period. It was noted that annual monitoring was completed for both Save Our Lakes and PLOTS agreements. No agreements were out of compliance.

11/30/19 – Status report received. The report states that no additional agreements were signed during this reporting period. It was noted that annual monitoring was completed for both Save Our Lakes and PLOTS agreements. No agreements were out of compliance.

Several of the PLOTS agreements will expire December 31, 2019, the Department plans to maintain the benefits of these agreements by providing a rental payment to the landowner using non-OHF funds the Department has planned for in its existing 19-21 budget.

11/30/20 – Status report received. The report states that no additional agreements were signed during this reporting period. It was noted that annual monitoring was completed for both Save Our Lakes and PLOTS agreements. No agreements were out of compliance.

PLOTS agreements that are no longer active with the grant have been maintained by the Department with non-OHF funds.

11/30/21 – Status report received. The report states that no additional agreements were signed during this reporting period. It was noted that annual monitoring was completed for both Save Our Lakes and PLOTS agreements. No agreements were out of compliance.

PLOTS agreements that are no longer active with the grant have been maintained by the Department with non-OHF funds.