

Contract No. 011-129
“Stutsman County Prairie Management Toolbox”

Submitted by Audubon Dakota
 Primary Contact: Marshall Johnson
 Directives C, A, & B

PARTICIPANTS

Sponsor	Cost Share	
Audubon Dakota	\$ 60,000.00	
Landowners	<u>\$ 412,617.00</u>	
Subtotal Cash Cost Share		\$ 472,617.00
Audubon Dakota	\$ 240,917.00	
Stutsman County Soil Conservation District	<u>\$ 20,000.00</u>	
Subtotal In-kind Cost Share		\$ 260,917.00
Audubon Dakota	<u>\$ 848.00</u>	
Subtotal Indirect Cost Share		\$ 848.00
North Dakota Industrial Commission	<u>\$ 943,489.00</u>	
Subtotal OHF Funding		<u>\$ 943,489.00</u>
Total Project Cost		<u>\$1,677,871.00</u>

Project Schedule – 2 years
 Contract Date – 7/16/2018
 Start Date – 7/16/2018
 Completion Date – 8/31/2020

Project Deliverables:
 Status Report: November 1, 2018 ✓
 Status Report: November 1, 2019 ✓
 Status Report: November 1, 2020* ✓
 Status Report: December 31, 2021*^ ✓
 Status Report:# December 31, 2022^#
 Final Report: December 31, 2023#

*, ^, # Denotes changes to original contract.

OBJECTIVE/STATEMENT OF WORK:

During the first year, the project will provide private landowners support programs that offer assistance for conservation focused agricultural practices, including: prairie restoration, perimeter fencing, cross fencing, water structures, and weed control. Grazing systems will be implemented on approximately 4,213 acres of grazing land. Invasive vegetation and weed species control will be implemented on 3,000 acres and prairie restoration on 1,750 acres with an emphasis on lands enrolled in other conservation programs, such as PLOTS. Audubon Dakota’s Brigham Alkali Lake Sanctuary will utilize funds to restore 750 acres currently in a cropping project to reduce weed infestation prior to reseeding and to add 86,203 feet of fencing to the existing grazing system. Ultimately, this will be used as a demonstration site for private landowners to learn about the available Stutsman County Prairie Management Toolbox practices through field tours and workshops. These acres will be opened to private producers for grazing.

STATUS:

The contract has been approved and executed by all the parties.

November 2018

To date, Audubon Dakota has entered into agreements with 7 landowners within Stutsman County, with the potential to positively impact 3,314 acres through grazing infrastructure installation and invasive species removal between 2018 and 2019.

One phase of a 3-phased project had been fully completed in 2018, which installed 9,700 feet of fence on approximately 76 acres. Project total was \$17,460.00, with the landowner responsible for \$6,984.00 and OHF grant dollars contributing the remaining \$10,476.00. The next 2 phases of this project will be completed in 2019.

August 2019

*A no cost budget amendment has been requested and granted that eliminates cattle guards from the project and reallocates funds to fencing. Audubon Dakota indicated that through discussions with the township, it was determined that fencing would be a better fit.

November 2019

Work has been done this year to improve habitat on 10,045 acres through grazing infrastructure installation, invasive species removal, and prairie restoration.

Audubon Dakota has entered into agreements with 8 additional landowners to enroll 8,132 acres in the Toolbox program and is in the process of enrolling 3 new landowners to enroll another 442 acres. These agreements range in length from five to ten years and ensure the habitat is managed as grassland habitat for the full contract term. Additionally, Audubon Dakota Range Ecologists have engaged with 5 enrolled landowners to establish Habitat Management plans. Since last reporting, five landowners have completed or partially completed grazing infrastructure projects under their landowner agreements totaling 141,001 feet of fence installation impacting 9,705 acres. They have also removed invasive species impacting 100 acres. The program has funded 5 water tanks, 1 well, and 2 spring developments to support grazing. We have also conducted 186 acres of prairie restoration at the Edward M. Brigham Sanctuary.

Pictures are available in the full report.

February 2020

The contractor has requested and been granted a no cost extension due to weather related delays.

March 2020

For the reporting period, six site visits were performed to initiate the development of habitat management plans for six individual projects in partnership with the participating landowners. Audubon Dakota designed, ordered, and will be distributing project site signs. Landowners will be given a sign to post on their project site, recognizing it as a Prairie Management Toolbox site, and crediting financial supporters such as the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund.

This reporting period, Audubon received receipts and invoices for three grazing infrastructure projects on 1,055 enrolled acres. 31,360 feet of new fencing and one water well were installed in support of grazing management.

November 2020

Since the last reporting period, it was discovered that four invoices totaling \$59,876.41 were incorrectly recorded as cash match instead of billable to OHF grant funds. Correcting journal entries were completed on 6/30/2020. As a result, after adding in \$27,263.71 of current landowner cash match, current cash match reflected in this reporting period is -\$32,612.70.

North Dakota OHF dollars supported the following projects in Stutsman County:

- Grazing Infrastructure
 - 410 acres: Fencing and livestock water development on high quality native prairie.
 - 28 acres: Fencing installed to allow stocking cattle on grass that had never been grazed.

- Prairie Restoration
 - 91 acres: A native seed mix was inter-seeded into an existing degraded stand of grass.
- Invasive Species Control
 - 51.5 acres: Russian olives invading a native grassland planting were pulled and cut by a local contractor.

Additionally, Audubon Dakota staff completed avian and vegetation surveys at 15 project sites to evaluate the applied management impact to site diversity and inform further habitat management decisions. The staff encountered almost 1800 birds with an average of 14 different species per transect among 39 transects. Seven of the 10 Audubon priority bird species for the Dakotas were found on project sites. One of them, the Western Meadowlark, was recorded 92 times. The highest number and density of this species were found on sites with completed projects.

Photos are included in the full report.

October 2021

A no cost extension has been granted due to issues associated with the drought and Covid.

January 2022

Grazing Infrastructure: 8,872.7 acres

Prairie Restoration: 407 acres

Custom seed mix was purchased for the seeding of 407 acres at Edward M. Brigham III Sanctuary at Alkali Lake. Seeding was scheduled for fall 2021; however, was delayed to spring 2022 due to persistent drought conditions.

Invasive Species Control: 181 acres

During the 2021 field season, avian and vegetation surveys were completed at 4 project sites to evaluate the applied management impact to site diversity and inform further habitat management decisions. Staff encountered over 270 birds with an average of 8 different species per transect among 71 transects. Four of the 10 Audubon priority bird species for the Dakotas were found on project sites: Sharp-tailed grouse, Grasshopper sparrow, Western meadowlark, and bobolink.

October, 2022

The Contractor requested a budget modification—reallocating the budget between the budget line items and presented the request to the OHF Advisory Board in March, 2022. Based on the Board's recommendation the Commission granted the request. The Contractor also requested a no-cost extension to the grant for an additional year to December 31, 2023. This extension was granted and an additional status report was added to the reporting schedule and the final report is to be delivered by December 31, 2023.

Dated 10/19/2022