

Contract No. 011-130
“Urban Woods and Prairie Initiative Expansion”

Submitted by Audubon Dakota
 Primary Contact: Marshall Johnson
 Directives D & C

PARTICIPANTS

Sponsor	Cost Share	
Audubon Dakota	<u>\$ 90,000.00</u>	
Subtotal Cash Cost Share		\$ 90,000.00
Audubon Dakota	\$ 23,531.00	
Fargo Park District	\$ 43,125.00	
Bismarck Parks and Recreation District	\$ 33,885.00	
Minot Park District	<u>\$ 61,472.00</u>	
Subtotal In-kind Cost Share		\$ 162,013.00
Audubon Dakota	<u>\$ 4,900.00</u>	
Subtotal Indirect Cost Share		\$ 4,900.00
North Dakota Industrial Commission	<u>\$530,000.00</u>	
Subtotal OHF Funding		<u>\$530,000.00</u>
Total Project Cost		\$786,913.00

Project Schedule – 2 years
 Contract Date – 7/16/2018
 Start Date – 7/16/2018
 Completion Date – 11/1/2020

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

*, ^ Denotes changes to original contract.

OBJECTIVE/STATEMENT OF WORK:

This project will perform enhancement seeding on 591 acres, enroll 591 acres in a 3 year management plan, and remove woody invasive species on 150 of those acres in Bismarck, Grand Forks, and Minot. This will also provide enhancement seeding on 111 acres and enroll 14 acres within a 3 year management plan in Fargo. Audubon Dakota and partners will work with local contractors to install native vegetation through seeding and restoration, and establish maintenance of each site for 3 years including herbicide application, prescribed burning, and manual removal. After the initial 3 years, maintenance will be turned over to the project partners. Audubon Dakota will create a management toolbox for the partners to outline future management goals and objectives of the sites and highlight appropriate management practices while still allowing for adaptive management. OHF funds will not be used for administrative purposes.

STATUS:

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

November 2018

Status report received. The report states:

Audubon partnered with the City of **Grand Forks** and Grand Forks Park District to identify the first UWP site, which is located on the southern 5 acres of the English Coulee. A Memorandum of Understanding

and a Site Management Plan Agreement were finalized between Audubon Dakota and the Grand Forks Park District (landowning entity) by the end of September 2018, which initiated the site preparations conducted by the Park District. In order to properly prepare for the spring 2019 restoration, Grand Forks Park District was responsible for the first herbicide application which was performed in October 2018, as directed by Prairie Restorations Inc., the project contractor. In early spring 2019, the Park District will till the upland acres and apply a second round of the herbicide treatment. The site will then be properly prepared for the seeding, which will be conducted by Prairie Restorations, Inc.

Audubon has partnered with the **Bismarck** Park District to identify the first two UWP sites within the city – Zonta Park and Atkinson Nature Park. A Memorandum of Understanding has been finalized between the two parties, and a Site Management Plan Agreement will be finalized by the end of November. Zonta Park will be restored in spring 2019, therefore, the Bismarck Park District is responsible for the herbicide treatment and tillage of the site this fall, 2018. A second herbicide spray will be performed in early spring 2019 by Bismarck Park District, which will allow Prairie Restorations Inc. to restore the 5 acre park. Atkinson Nature Park is invaded with Russian olive trees, and Audubon will hire a tree removal company in the winter of 2018-2019 to remove those species within the 80 acre park. During the 2019 spring, PRI will be responsible for the follow up herbicide application to the cut trees. In the summer of 2019, 5,000 native fruiting shrub species will be planted and managed by PRI.

Audubon has partnered with the **Minot** Park District to identify three UWP sites within the city – Nubbin Park, Woodland Trail Park, and Oak Park (an Important Bird Area). A Memorandum of Understanding and a Site Management Plan Agreement will be finalized between Audubon Dakota and the Minot Park District by the end of November 2018. Nubbin Park is a 4 acre park that has the potential to become an oak savanna type habitat within the City of Minot. Site preparation and restoration will begin here in the spring of 2019. Woodland Trail Park is 33 acres (30 acres woodlands, 3 acres prairie) and will receive tree clean up in the winter of 2018-2019, while the prairie acres will be prepped and restored in the spring of 2019. Oak Park is 10 acres and is fairly invaded with common buckthorn, therefore, management efforts in 2019 will be focused on the removal and treatment of this species throughout Oak Park.

Audubon, **Fargo** Park District, and PRI began the site preparation for the restoration of Lion's Conservancy Park and Iwen Park along the Red River, covering 25 acres. The sites have been prepared by the Fargo Park District (herbicide application and tilling), and will receive a spring 2019 seeding in May.

In total, Audubon and partners have impacted 162 acres so far, and will plan to impact 702 urban acres across the four North Dakota cities during the entire project period.

November 2019

Since the last reporting period, Audubon Dakota has planted, enhanced and managed 188 urban acres in Fargo, Bismarck, Minot, and Grand Forks through the Urban Woods and Prairies Initiative Expansion.

In **Fargo**, common buckthorn removal was conducted at Forest River Nature Park on 20 acres in November 2018 and January 2019, led by volunteers and Prairie Restorations Inc. Cut trees were stump treated by PRI, and received a follow up foliar application in October 2019. Forest River (5 acres) and Briarwood (6 acres) nature parks prairie plantings received prescribed burns in May. Heritage Hills Nature Park (15 acres) and Pontes Prairie (10 acres) were mowed and harrowed in preparation for the high diversity enhancement seedings in June. In August 5 acres at Lions Conservancy nature park were seeded. Throughout the summer months, Audubon Dakota continued collaborating with Prairie Restorations, Inc. to identify and implement management needs for the woodland and prairie habitats at enrolled UWP sites.

Across all sampled sites, overall avian species richness was 50 species. Forest River had the highest average avian diversity of any site (24 species), followed by Heritage Hills (22 species). Average individual birds observed at UWP sites was 10.82 birds per survey point. Heritage Hills had the highest number of individual birds per survey point (10 individuals), followed by Lemke Park (nine individuals per survey point) and Lions Conservancy Park (eight individuals per survey point). The most abundant bird species were American Robin (0.51 individuals per survey point), Common Grackle (0.51 individuals per survey point), Brown-headed Cowbird (0.47 individuals per survey point), Chipping Sparrow (0.46 individuals per survey point), and Song Sparrow (0.39 individuals per survey point).

In **Bismarck**, Russian olive trees were removed across 80 acres of Atkinson Nature Park between December 2018 and March 2019. In May, Zonta Nature Park was prepped for a June seeding on 2 acres. Unfortunately, a few days later a majority of the site flooded due to heavy summer rains, which negatively impacted a portion of the new planting. On the acres not flooded though, a great flush of native plant species were recorded. Audubon will monitor the site vegetation in spring 2020 to determine the need for reseeding. In July, PRI planted 4,000 native trees such as Juneberry, American linden, pin cherry, and American cranberry bush, and planted native prairie at Atkinson Nature Park to return plant biodiversity to the area after the Russian olive removal.

Avian surveys were conducted at two Bismarck UWP sites in 2019. A total of 23 species were observed at the Bismarck sites, with 19 species observed at Atkinson Park and 10 species observed at Zonta Park. Both sites had similar amounts of individual birds per survey point, with 13.3 birds observed per point at Atkinson Park and 13.5 birds observed per point at Zonta Park. The most abundant species were Mourning Dove (1.5 individuals per survey point) and House Sparrow, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, and American Robin, each with 1.25 individuals per survey point.

In **Minot**, Russian olives and excess woody materials were removed from Woodland Trail Park across 30 acres. Oak Park (10 acres) will receive Russian olive removal in the winter of 2019-2020, while Nubbin Park (5 acres) will be seeded in spring 2020.

In **Grand Forks**, the English Coulee Nature Park (5 acres) was site prepped by the Grand Forks Park District in August 2019 and seeded the same month by PRI. Unfortunately, the city experienced a major rainfall event (up to 6 inches) that caused the English Coulee to come out of its banks. This event, and sequential rain and snowfall, will likely influence the success of the planting. However, Audubon will diligently monitor the site in the spring to determine if a reseeding is necessary.

February 2020

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

March 2020

Interim status report received. The report states in part:

Since the last reporting period, Audubon Dakota has completed restoration management practices on a total of 35 acres. Work was completed at Heritage Hills Nature Park, a **Fargo**, ND UWP site in November 2019. Nonnative woody vegetation within the restored prairie acres were mechanically removed to prevent the further degradation of the native plant community.

Staff traveled to **Grand Forks** to meet with local partners to determine the best approach for the restoration efforts along the English Coulee. Since the English Coulee is often plagued with low flow, cattail issues, and nuisance odors this stretch of urban water will be Audubon's focus for the UWP Initiative in Grand Forks. Audubon will be collaborating with the main public landowners to restore the Coulee's riparian areas.

Project site signs were ordered and delivered to be placed at **Bismarck** restoration sites, and a replacement vinyl overlay was purchased for the large nature park site at Briarwood/Bison Meadows Park in **Fargo**.

November 2020

Bismarck – Annual management of Bismarck sites - Atkinson Nature Park and Zonta Park completed. Atkinson Nature Park was mowed and spot-sprayed to control invasive species such as leafy spurge and thistle. Tree survival was monitored of the trees planted in 2019. A satisfactory number tolerated the winter temperatures and thrived throughout the summer of 2020. At Zonta Park, after its initial seeding in 2019, the park experienced an extreme flood event that was expected to minimize the success of the restoration. Fortunately, the native plants were resilient.

Grand Forks – The English Coulee site has proven to be challenging due to consistent seasonal flooding that jeopardizes restoration success. The 2020 growing season was dedicated to controlling weedy species such as cockleburs, thistle, and burdock within the planted area. Despite these challenges, native species were recorded and their success will be monitored into the 2021 growing season. Project signs were installed to help explain the project to trail and park users. In the early summer of 2020, Audubon Dakota assisted the local Audubon Grand Forks Chapter in establishing a pollinator garden at Sertoma Park.

Fargo –Pontes Prairie (19 acres) received a prescribed fire to reduce the plant litter build up and prepare the site for supplemental forb seeding. Iwen Park (20 acres) and Bison Meadows (10 acres) were seeded with a high diversity native seed mix (10 grasses, 23 forbs). Lions Conservancy, planted in summer 2019, displayed immense success. Audubon Dakota assisted Fargo Park District with the planting of pollinator garden plots at Legacy Park. The prairie restoration at Forest River Nature Park was enhanced through a pollinator planting event in partnership with local Microsoft employee volunteers. More than 3,000 wildflower live plant plugs were planted including diverse native species such as prairie milkweed, rough blazing star, and purple prairie clover. Avian surveys were not conducted due to hiring restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Minot – Nubbin Park (4 acres) was restored with a high diversity native seed mix. Follow-up management such as mowing and spot-spraying will begin during the 2021 growing season to ensure invasive species control. Woodland Trail Park's prairie restoration area (3 acres) was managed by mowing to prevent the establishment of invasive species such as thistle. Minot-focused Urban Woods and Prairies Initiative brochures were provided to the Minot Park District to assist in familiarizing residents with these projects in their community.

October 2021

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

January 2022

Bismarck – Integrated Prairie Management continued at Atkinson Park (3 acres) and Zonta Park (5 acres).

Grand Forks – 23,000 square feet of seeding near the coulee at Sertoma Park and Integrated Prairie Management at English Coulee (3 acres) was completed. In July, Audubon Dakota staff met with representatives of the City of Grand Forks and the University of North Dakota (UND) to identify near future project sites along the English Coulee owned by UND. Prairie restoration and woodland enhancement efforts are planned to be undertaken in spring 2022.

Fargo – Integrated prairie management continued at Heritage Hills (32 acres), Forest River (16 acres), Briarwood Park (36 acres), Pontes Prairie (10 acres), Unicorn Park (8 acres), Lions Conservancy Park (5

acres), Iwen Park (20 acres), Bison Meadows, Legacy Park (1 acre), and Crofton Coves (1 acre). Additionally, prairie sod was planted in front of the Orchard Glen sign, plugs were hand planted in Forest River, and Bison Meadows was prepped and seeded. In a typical year, Audubon Dakota would have hired a seasonal technician to complete avian surveys at each Fargo UWP site. Unfortunately, no avian data is available for the 2021 field season due to funding and hiring restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Minot – Nubbin Park (4 acres) received seeding with a short dry prairie mix and integrated prairie management. Over the summer in 2021, Audubon Dakota staff were invited to join the Minot Greenway Taskforce which is composed of local city and park district representatives along with residents. The Greenway Taskforce is intended to focus land-use planning efforts around the potential urban natural habitat to be created by the Greenway in 2022. To date, the Taskforce has held three planning meetings.

Dated 1/24/2022