

OHF FINAL REPORT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Number 013-140

Recipient North Dakota Natural Resources Trust

Award Amount \$104,500

Total Project Costs \$303,616.67

Total OHF Funds Received \$104,500



Goals of Project:

The North Dakota Grassland Restoration Project (NDGRP) grant goal was to partner with Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF), private landowners, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW) and North Dakota Natural Resources Trust (Trust) to provide financial assistance in the form of cost-sharing the seeding of cropland acres into grassland. The restored grassland will be used for livestock grazing, haying, and/or wildlife habitat. The goal was to restore 2000 acres in a three-year project timeframe. The NDGRP provided cost-share for the grass seed mix up to \$75 per acre by splitting the cost from multiple partners. The Outdoor Heritage Fund provided up to \$50 per acre, ND Natural Resources Trust provided up to \$15 per acre, and PFW provided up to \$15 per acre for the grass seed mix. In addition to this assistance, if the cost per acre was higher than \$75, the PFW provided funding up to the \$110 per acre. Higher seed mix diversity was the reason for the higher cost per acre. The landowner provided a minimum of \$45 per acre in seedbed preparation, the seeding operation and grass establishment management, such as noxious weed control.

Work Accomplished:

The Trust coordinated the delivery of the grant in conjunction with PFW. The North Dakota Industrial Commission (NDIC) and Trust entered into the contract in late 2018. Landowners were informed about the availability of the program in early 2019. Landowners selected the acres to be restored. Restoration was completed from 2019 to 2021. The NDGRP completed 20 signed landowner agreements in 13 separate counties. The grant had a goal of 2,000 acres to be restored and the final amount of restored acres was 2,720.19. The breakout by ND counties, acres and OHF funds are as follows: Benson-82.2-\$3,406.85; Bottineau-226.9-\$5,451.95; Burleigh-344.1-\$14,344.97; Divide-380.4-\$8,015.26; Eddy-807.1-\$34,859.72; Emmons-43-\$2,086.72; Kidder-61.4-\$1,549.38; LaMoure-138.69-\$6,934.50; Logan-25-\$813.67; McHenry-100-\$4,437.90; Pierce-215-\$10,750.00; Ward-186-\$7,534.77 and Williams-110.4-\$4,314.31.

Project Results:

The total amount of the project costs was \$303,616.67. The OHF grant provided a total of \$104,500 in grant funds. In the grant proposal the Trust requested \$100,000 for cost-share assisting and \$4,500 in funding for contracted services, including cultural reviews and Trust staffing. In the funding recommendation by OHF the Advisory Board, the \$4,500 was restricted to cultural reviews. If not spent for the cultural reviews, it may be used for other activities included in the scope of work. The Trust used these funds for additional OHF cost-share funding to landowners for a total of \$104,500. The Trust provided \$32,304.20 in grass seeding cost-share. The PFW provided \$27,115.78 in grass seeding cost-share. Landowners provided \$123,007.50 for seedbed preparation, seeding operation and grass stand management. The Trust provided in-kind match of \$5,861.99 and PFW provided in-kind match of \$10,827.20.

All landowners were made aware of the public access availability of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Private Land Open to Sportsmen (PLOTS) program. Unfortunately, of the 20 landowners who participated into the NDGRP, none of the landowners enrolled into the PLOTS program.

Value to North Dakota:

The NDGRP was highly beneficial to ND landowners and many wildlife species in the state. The grassland acres restored through this partnership enhanced agricultural operations in a working lands concept and helped support healthy wildlife communities. The NDGRP meets the directive of the 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan that prioritized conservation action. The NDGRP program addressed OHF Directive C by developing, enhancing, conserving, and restoring wildlife habitat on private lands. The primary wildlife species positively impacted by this project included declining grassland birds, migratory waterfowl species and other resident bird, mammal and insect species.

The project also addressed Directive B by supporting agricultural stewardship and improving water quality. The NDGRP program encouraged grazing and haying management on the restored acres making it a working concept that was beneficial to livestock producing operations. If the grass seeding was planted for livestock grazing purposes, a rotational grazing management plan was developed to further enhance the grassland. If the restoration was intended to be utilized for haying, the earliest haying date allowed was July 15th.