

Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant Application



Instructions

After completing the form, applications and supporting documentation may be submitted by e-mail to ndicgrants@nd.gov. It is preferred that only electronic copies are submitted.

You are not limited to the spacing provided, except in those instances where there is a limit on the number of words. If you need additional space, please indicate that on the application form, answer the question on a separate page, and include with your submission.

The application and all attachments must be received by the application deadline. You may submit your application at any time prior to the application deadline. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications prior to the deadline for staff review in order ensure that proposals will be complete when submitted on deadline date.** Incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

Please review the back of this form to determine project eligibility, definitions, budget criteria, and statutory requirements.

Project Name: North Dakota Prairie Management Toolbox

Name of Organization: Audubon Great Plains

Federal Tax ID#: 13-1624102

Contact Person/Title: Joshua Lefers, Working Lands Program Manager

Address: 3002 Fiechtner Dr S, Ste A

City: Fargo

State: North Dakota

Zip Code: 58012

E-mail Address joshua.lefers@audubon.org, lindsey.lee@audubon.org

Web Site Address (If applicable) greatplains.audubon.org

Phone: 701-298-3373

List names of co-applicants if this is a joint proposal

MAJOR Directive:

Choose only one response

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

Directive B. Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

Directive C. Developing, enhancing, conserving and restoring wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

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

Additional Directive:

Choose all that apply

Directive A.

Directive B.

Directive C.

Directive D.

Type of organization:

State Agency

Political Subdivision

Tribal Entity

Tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation.

Abstract/Executive Summary.

Summarize the project, including its objectives, expected results, duration, total project costs and participants. (no more than 500 words)

The North Dakota Prairie Management Toolbox (NDPMT), led by Audubon Great Plains (AGP), will provide financial assistance to private landowners in eastern North Dakota as a strategy to improve grassland habitat health on 5,000 acres. Project planning and coordination will be led by AGP range ecologists who will provide technical assistance to landowners through development of ranch-level habitat management plans (HMP).

Employing the lessons learned from past successful toolbox projects, NDPMT will provide cost-share and technical assistance for woody species removal and grazing infrastructure. This project will build on past successful Prairie Management Toolbox projects within eastern North Dakota.

For this OHF grant application, Audubon is seeking \$747,400 from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund, largely directed at financial assistance for landowners. Across the three-year project period, Audubon will collaborate with private landowners to implement regenerative grassland management practices including invasive woody vegetation removal on 600 acres and grazing infrastructure on 4,400 acres.

Project Duration:

Indicate the intended schedule for drawing down OHF funds.

January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2027

Year one will focus on landowner engagement and agreement development. Most funds are anticipated to be spent in years 1-3, with approximately 1/3 of funds anticipated to be spent each year.

Amount of Grant request: \$ 747,400

Total Project Costs: \$ 1,206,512.26

Note: in-kind and indirect costs can be used for matching funds.

Amount of Matching Funds: \$ 499,112.26

A minimum of 25% Match Funding is required. Indicate if the matching funds will be in-kind, indirect or cash. Please provide verification that these matching funds are available for your project. Note that effective as of July 1, 2015 no State General Fund dollars can be used for a match unless funding was legislatively appropriated for that purpose.

Amount of Match	Funding Source	Type of Match (Cash, In-kind or Indirect)
\$ 190,512.26	Audubon	Indirect
\$35,000	Audubon	Cash-Staff costs
\$273,600	Landowners	In Kind and cash share for project costs

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 in the back of this application.

Narrative

Organization Information

Audubon Great Plains is the regional program for North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska within the National Audubon Society. Since 1905, the National Audubon Society has been focused on conserving bird habitat, promoting avian education, and engaging individuals and communities in a variety of activities and opportunities. Audubon Dakota as a North Dakota state program was instituted in 1997, however Audubon's role in the Dakotas spans back to the mid-1970s.

The mission of the National Audubon Society is to protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation.

Audubon seeks partnerships that advance its habitat conservation goals, including supporting grassland habitat projects and the ranching industry. Audubon has six full time staff members in North Dakota, and Audubon Great Plains' Advisory Board includes eight North Dakota citizens. Currently, Audubon directly manages roughly 5,000 acres within the state and partners with landowners to inform management on an additional 150,000 acres in North Dakota. In all of our programs, the efforts and cooperation of our supporters is crucial to our success and the conservation of bird habitat in the Great Plains.

Purpose of Grant

NDPMT is a continuation of past successful toolbox projects, which provide financial and technical assistance for conservation focused agricultural practices to improve grassland diversity and structure for wildlife and pollinators. This project will build on past successful Prairie Management Toolbox projects in eastern North Dakota over the next four years, through December 2027.

NDPMT will implement grazing systems on approximately 4,400 acres of grazing land. This goal meets Directives B and C by enabling landowners to switch from season-long grazing to rotational grazing or to enhance rotational grazing systems to allow for improved management. Fencing and adequate water infrastructure directly benefit producers through increased forage production, profitability, and forage quality. Rotational grazing also provides a diversity of structure for grassland birds and other wildlife. Financial assistance allows producers to quickly adopt and adapt to rotational grazing systems. Audubon is always looking towards innovation in grazing systems and is working with producers to identify implementation options for virtual fencing in North Dakota as the technology becomes available. An early opportunity is working with a North Dakota based company, 701x, that provides livestock tracking resources through GPS-enabled ear tags. Acres with grazing systems provided through the Toolbox will be covered by a 10-year non-conversion agreement with Audubon Great Plains. Landowners will select the type of fencing and water infrastructure that best meets their needs based on OHF allowable reimbursement on current NRCS cost share payment rates and NRCS practice scenario guidance.

NDPMT will provide woody invasive species control for at least 600 acres of grasslands. Currently at least 9 landowners are waiting for funding, representing 500 acres of conservation work growing out of previous Toolbox projects. This goal meets Directives B and C by restoring open grassland conditions favored by grassland birds and pollinators as well as protecting rangelands as open space for livestock production. Controlling invasive woody species is critical, as species like Russian olive, Siberian Elm, eastern red cedar, and other invasive woody vegetation are proven to have numerous negative impacts on the diversity of grassland ecosystems. In the 1950s and 60s, species such as RO and Siberian elm were introduced for use in shelter belts where they were very successful. Only now are we realizing the damage these trees can do to our grasslands when they spread from their intended areas. The qualities

that made them great when first introduced, being fast growing and quick spreading, are the reasons they are now such a problem. Russian olives easily crowd out native plant species and even alter soil chemistry, modifying the native plant community (Zouhar 2005). Though eastern red cedar is native to North America, it has become a notorious encroaching species in the North American Great Plains and is driving a large-scale woodland transition, and an associated suite of social-ecological consequences (Twidwell et al. 2013b), including reduced livestock forage and displaced native grasses and forbs (Smith 2011, Meneguzzo and Liknes 2015). Ongoing research at University of Nebraska-Lincoln shows that early action against woody species is the best and most cost-effective way to conserve the benefits associated with large-scale open grasslands. The research recommends a multi-pronged approach, which includes returning fire to the landscape, early control of juvenile trees, and mechanical removal of mature encroaching woody species to reduce seed dispersion. Though cattle will occasionally consume the leaves of invasive trees, overall they provide little to no forage value. Clark and Wilson (2001) established that mechanical removal of invasive woody vegetation in prairies and associated prairie wetlands results in an increase in flowering forbs that pollinators and grassland birds rely on. In recent years, conservation practitioners have become aware of the dire threat that they pose to bird habitat and the livelihood of ranchers; however, many find the expense to remove these trees prohibitive for the average producer. Control of these species is a major challenge for landowners to achieve, thus financial and technical assistance is critical to ensure timely and effective removal of these nuisance species. These acres will be covered by a 10-year non-conversion agreement with Audubon Great Plains.

Citations:

- Clark, D.L., Wilson, M.V. Fire, mowing, and hand-removal of woody species in restoring a native wetland prairie in the willamette valley of oregon. *Wetlands* **21**, 135–144 (2001). [https://doi.org/10.1672/0277-5212\(2001\)021\[0135:FMAHRO\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1672/0277-5212(2001)021[0135:FMAHRO]2.0.CO;2)
- Meneguzzo, Dacia & C. Liknes, Greg. (2015). Status and Trends of Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) in the Central United States: Analyses and Observations Based on Forest Inventory and Analysis Data. *Journal of Forestry*. 113. 10.5849/jof.14-093.
- Smith, S. 2011. Eastern Red-Cedar: Positives, Negatives, and Management. The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation. 8 pp. <http://www.waterandenergyprogress.org/library/nfwf1101.pdf>
- Twidwell D, [Rogers WE](#), [Fuhlendorf SD](#), [Wonkka CL](#), Engle DM, Weir JR, [Kreuter UP](#), Taylor CA. The rising Great Plains fire campaign: Citizens' response to woody plant encroachment *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. 11: e64-e71. DOI: [10.1890/130015](https://doi.org/10.1890/130015)
- Zouhar, K. 2005. *Elaeagnus angustifolia*. In: Fire Effects Information System, [Online]. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory (Producer). Available: <https://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/tree/elaang/all.html>

Is this project part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan? Yes X No

Management of Project

Audubon Great Plains will provide management, coordination, and administration to the NDPMT grant from the Audubon Great Plains office in Fargo, ND.

NDPMT will focus on grassland acres in the project area and 5,000 acres will be impacted within the project period through grazing infrastructure installation and invasive woody species removal. Landowners interested in additional cost share or public access incentives will be directed to the Private Lands Open To Sportsmen (PLOTS) program through the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. If PLOTS is not of interest to the landowner, Audubon Great Plains will provide a North Dakota Wildlife Federation “Ask Before You Enter” metal sign to open project acres for public access.

Audubon Great Plains staff will provide tracking and reporting for all project agreements following grant guidelines. The Audubon Great Plains staff members associated with the project will be Josh Lefers, Juli Bosmoe, Charlene Prodzinski, and Lindsey Lee.

Josh Lefers is the Working Lands Program Manager and provides implementation guidance and strategy for Prairie Management Toolboxes.

Juli Bosmoe is Audubon Great Plains' Senior Range ecologist and provides on-the-ground technical assistance to landowners enrolled in the Prairie Management Toolbox.

Charlene Prodzinski is Audubon Great Plains' western North Dakota range ecologist and provides on-the-ground technical assistance to landowners enrolled in the Prairie Management Toolbox.

Lindsey Lee is Audubon Great Plains' operations manager and is responsible for administrating the Prairie Management Toolbox project contracts and payment requests.

Evaluation

The NDPMT project will be considered successful if, during the project period, acreage goals for each project objective are met, and landowners are approving and supportive of the services provided. Each enrolled landowner will collaborate with an Audubon Great Plains employee to develop a habitat management plan, detailing land management goals over the life of the project. Strategies to improve grassland productivity are incorporated into the habitat management plan and are evaluated through site and cattle health monitoring reports by the landowner and Audubon staff.

Financial Information

Project Budget

Project Expense	OHF Request	Applicant's Match Share (Cash)	Applicant's Match Share (In-Kind)	Applicant's Match Share (Indirect)	Other Project Sponsor's Share	Total Each Project Expense
Livestock and wildlife friendly grazing systems	\$351,000	\$	\$	\$	\$234,000	\$585,000
Brush Management	\$356,400	\$	\$	\$	\$39,600	\$396,000
Cultural resource surveys	\$5,000	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Staff	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$	\$	\$	\$
Indirect	\$	\$	\$	\$190,512.26	\$	\$
Total Costs	\$747,400	\$35,000	\$0	\$190,512.26	\$273,600	\$1,206,512.26

Note: Costs for seeding, fencing, pipelines, wells, and cover crops cannot exceed NRCS Field Office Tech Guide without justification. Projects involving perimeter fencing must follow NRCS eligibility standards.

Budget Narrative

Livestock and Wildlife Friendly Grazing Systems: Grazing system development support request is \$351,000 and will follow the NRCS Office Tech Guidelines for Allowable Cost. Fencing will be provided to landowners at 60% cost-share payment based on NRCS cost-share payment rates. The water developments will use these rates for agreement development but will pay 60% cost-share based on actual costs. The landowners will provide the remaining 40% cost-share on both fence and water.

Invasive Species Control: Landowner financial assistance for invasive woody control: \$356,400. Project expense rate is based upon the average estimate rates Audubon Great Plains received from local tree service contractors (\$660/ac., 250 acres), which are comparable to NRCS FOTG rates (\$660.23/acre). Landowners will be responsible for 10% of contractor costs for invasive species removal, for a total cash match of \$39,600. Enrolled landowners will be responsible for post treatment enhancement, including brush management through chemical application or removal of cut trees.

Contractual Services: Project expense rate was based upon industry average for cultural resource surveys of \$1,250/survey. Audubon expects to need to contract 4 surveys over the course of the project period.

Staff Time: A portion of the staff expenses to implement project activities, including site visits, contracts management, and reporting.

Indirect rate: Audubon will contribute indirect rate match of \$190,512.26. This indirect total is based on our federally negotiated indirect cost rate of 25.49%.

Sustainability

To sustain the impact and longevity of projects enrolled in the NDPMT, each project is protected by a 10-year non-conversion agreement to ensure that working grasslands assisted with financial and technical assistance remain as grasslands. Audubon intends to implement the NDPMT in response to sustained landowner interest. Infrastructure projects tend to be generational; grazing infrastructure typically needs regular maintenance to last for a couple of decades and provide conservation benefit during that time. Landowners that choose to tackle invasive species or rejuvenate their grasslands will need to provide ongoing monitoring and maintenance; Audubon Great Plains and partners are committed to having staffing to provide technical assistance to those landowners. This will ensure that the overall habitat management support resources the toolbox provides can be accessible well into the future.

Each enrolled producer will work with Audubon Great Plains in developing a Habitat Management Plan, a multi-year guide outlining best management practices for developing, maintaining, and improving project habitat. Audubon range ecologists revisit the HMPs with producers on a regular basis to ensure habitat and production goals are met.

Partial Funding

If the ND Outdoor Heritage Fund is unable to fund a portion of NDPMT then program implementation will be delayed and/or reduced in scope, which could lead to missed opportunities for effective conservation within the conservation core area.

Partnership Recognition

At each participating site that utilizes NDPMT and approves signage use, program signs will be installed recognizing the financial support provided by OHF and other project supporters. Additionally, as the project is implemented within the landscape, Audubon Great Plains will place an emphasis on promoting NDPMT and project supporters through newspaper articles and local news exposure.

Awarding of Grants

Can you meet all the provisions of the sample contract? X Yes No

If there are provisions in that contract that your organization is unable to meet, please indicate below what those provisions would be:



Keith Trego
Executive Director
1605 E Capitol Avenue, Ste. 101
Bismarck, ND 58501-2102
(701) 223-8501
Fax: (701) 223-6937

September 6, 2023

Reice Haase, Acting Executive Director
North Dakota Industrial Commission
ATTN: Outdoor Heritage Fund Program
State Capitol – Fourteenth Floor
600 East Boulevard Ave., Dept. 405
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Mr. Haase:

On behalf of The North Dakota Natural Resources Trust in support of Audubon Great Plains' North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund grant project titled, *North Dakota Prairie Management Toolbox*. This project expands on the previously ND OHF funded projects a part of the Prairie Management Toolbox, which provide private landowners financial and technical support for grazing infrastructure, invasive species removal, and prairie restoration. To magnify the impact of these tools, Audubon Dakota will expand the Prairie Management Toolbox into thirty-five counties in eastern North Dakota to improve and enhance habitat on 5,000 acres.

The Trust's mission is to promote the retention, restoration, creation and wildlife friendly management of wetlands, grasslands and riparian areas by presenting practical conservation opportunities throughout North Dakota. From its inception, the Trust has played a role as facilitator between agricultural and conservation interests. We feel this proposal promotes sound grassland conservation practices on a voluntary basis to private landowners.

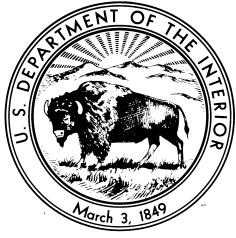
The North Dakota Natural Resources Trust therefore fully supports the goals and commitments presented within Audubon Great Plains' ND Outdoor Heritage Fund proposal, and we look forward to seeing the program continue its success in the coming years.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Keith Trego

To preserve, enhance, restore, and manage wetlands and associated wildlife habitat, grasslands, and riparian areas in the state of North Dakota.



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
North Dakota Partners for Fish and Wildlife Office
3425 Miriam Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501

September 7, 2023

Reice Haase
North Dakota Industrial Commission
ATTN: Outdoor Heritage Fund Program
600 East Boulevard Ave., Dept. 405
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: North Dakota Prairie Management Toolbox OHF

Dear Mr. Haase:

I write on behalf of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's North Dakota Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (ND PFW) in support of Audubon Great Plains' North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund grant project titled, North Dakota Prairie Management Toolbox. This project expands on the previously OHF funded projects in ND as part of the Prairie Management Toolbox, which provides private landowners financial and technical support for grazing infrastructure, invasive species removal, and prairie restoration. To magnify the impact of these tools, Audubon Great Plains will expand the Prairie Management Toolbox into thirty-five counties in eastern North Dakota to improve and enhance habitat on 5,000 acres.

The ND PFW program has a long history of working closely with private landowners and conservation partners, providing financial and technical assistance on voluntary conservation efforts to restore, enhance and create wetland and grassland habitat on private land. The ND PFW program works closely with private landowners to foster partnerships on working lands that help conserve important wildlife habitat and also provide economic benefits for North Dakota's farmers and ranchers and other private landowners. Our approach is simple: Engage willing partners through non-regulatory incentives to conserve fish and wildlife values on their property. The ND PFW program was established in 1987 and since that time has worked on more than 4,200 habitat projects with more than 3,200 North Dakota farmers, ranchers, and other private landowners.

The ND PFW program therefore fully supports the goals and commitments presented within Audubon Great Plains' ND Outdoor Heritage Fund proposal, and we look forward to seeing the program continue its success in the coming years.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Scott J. McLeod,
USFWS, State Coordinator, ND Partners for Fish and Wildlife



September 8, 2023

To: North Dakota Industrial Commission

Subject: Audubon Great Plains' North Dakota Prairie Management Toolbox

NDIC,

I am writing regarding the ND Outdoor Heritage Fund grant being applied for by Audubon Great Plains.

Upon reviewing the proposal, it does indicate an intent to support USDA-NRCS mission and the core technical values which provide private landowners financial and technical support for grazing infrastructure, invasive species removal, and prairie restoration.

I hope to see a continuation in conservation success in North Dakota through direction and leadership provided by Audubon Great Plains.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andy Jewett".

Andy Jewett

James River CDU Supervisor

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Audubon Great Plains

Trade Name

<i>Filing Type</i>	Trade Name
<i>Status</i>	Active
<i>Owner Name</i>	NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
<i>Owner Address</i>	225 VARICK ST FL 7 NEW YORK, NY 10014-4396
<i>Nature of Business</i>	To protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow.
<i>Term of Duration</i>	Expires - 5 years
<i>Initial Filing Date</i>	09/06/2022
<i>Expiration Date</i>	09/06/2027
<i>Principal Address</i>	25 VARICK STREET 7TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10014
<i>Mailing Address</i>	25 VARICK ST FL 7 NEW YORK, NY 10013



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