

**WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE
[WLI]

LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

SEPTEMBER 2010

Submitted by

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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In consultation with

MINNESOTA BOARD OF WATER & SOIL RESOURCES

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COST OF PREPARING REPORT:

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 3.197, the cost of preparing this report was approximately \$1,400.

INTRODUCTION:

The goal of the “Working Lands Initiative” (WLI) is to support agriculture and wildlife based economics by fostering healthy communities in Minnesota’s prairie pothole region through cooperative, integrated approaches that enhance coordination, target investments, and inspire innovative thinking. This report is in response to:

Laws of 2007, Chapter 57 (S.F. 2096) Article 1; Section 4. “The commissioner must report to the legislative chairs on environmental finance for money appropriated in this subdivision on grassland/wetland complexes with specific outcomes, including acres of wetlands prairie grasses and forbs of a local ecotype preserved, restored, and enhanced during the 2008-2009 biennium.”

HISTORY:

In early 2005, a new concept for delivering conservation on private lands was being discussed in Minnesota as a broad based group of conservation partners met to explore options. The concept revolved around a formula of applying focused conservation on targeted acres. The basis for this targeting would be accomplished by applying ecological models for key wildlife species (i.e. certain duck, shorebird, and upland species) with geographic information system (GIS) tools.

The new partnership included Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, Minnesota Waterfowl Association, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, farm groups, and the Department of Natural Resources. After much discussion, a letter was sent to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior from Governor Tim Pawlenty (see Appendix, page 5) asking for formal designation of the WLI process in preparation of a “memorandum of understanding” to assist with and move this concept forward.

On July 29, 2005, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Commissioner, Gene Merriam, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director, Robyn Thorson, signed a “memorandum of understanding” formalizing the Working Lands Initiative partnership (see Appendix pages 6-8). Under this initiative, state and federal agencies work with local conservation groups to identify, map and protect the most productive wetland and grassland areas in the most effective manner possible. The emphasis is on voluntary, non-regulatory, incentive based programs compatible with agriculture and conservation. The Working Lands Initiative is part of a broader conservation agenda, which includes federal funding for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), designation of the Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, and others.

SCOPE OF THE ISSUE:

In Minnesota’s prairie pothole region the fate of wildlife is largely determined by what happens on private lands. With sufficient technical and financial assistance, private landowners can affect landscape changes that would dramatically benefit wildlife habitat. WLI brings together public, private, and non-profit organizations in local “project teams” to provide assistance to landowners interested in identifying economically viable conservation focus areas and strategies. These areas are identified with the benefit of GIS tools, computer models, and local knowledge. In some cases, land might be set aside to restore wildlife habitat. Other projects might involve changes in certain agricultural practices in ways that support both wildlife and the economic vitality of the farming operation.

HOW WLI WORKS:

APPLYING THE SCIENCE:

It was agreed that better investment of conservation dollars could be accomplished if those dollars could be focused on relatively small, 4-9 square mile, complexes of

wetlands and grasslands. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey were called upon to provide detailed information related to the best areas of the state in the prairie pothole region where additional investment of conservation funds could result in the best return on those conservation dollars. The team who developed the maps, commonly referred to as “thunderstorm maps”, was the Habitat And Population Evaluation Team (HAPET). This scientific information was instrumental in determining where efforts would be focused and where any additional funds would be spent.

HABITAT COMPLEXES:

Local teams, at the county level, provide the initiative to develop project ideas and secure matching funds to address the conservation needs. These are identified as “focus counties” and are then eligible to apply for funds to address the needs in their project proposal.

It was determined that individual projects would fit within 4-9 square mile blocks, referred to as “target areas”. The goal for each target area would be 40% total grassland acres (one-half in permanent grassland), and 20% total wetland acres (one-half in seasonal and temporary basins). Priority for identifying target areas would be where a significant investment has already been made or major components of habitat are already in place. WLI efforts can then add the remaining management or restoration work to complete the conservation work, thereby maximizing the wildlife benefits. Most but not all, of the focus counties and target areas are within the prairie pothole region.

A map of the Focus Counties and Target Areas can be found in the Appendix of this report (see page 9).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Over 75% of Minnesota is privately owned. In much of the western and southwestern portion of the state, where most of the WLI efforts are focused, the percentage of privately owned lands exceeds 90%. Therefore, how private lands are managed has a very significant impact on the wildlife resources of this state. Since agricultural production is the main use of lands in this part of the state, it is imperative that efforts be in place to support those agricultural activities while also fostering healthy communities through cooperative, integrated approaches that enhance coordination, target investments, and inspire innovative thinking. Emphasis remains on voluntary, non-regulatory incentive based approaches.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

From Fiscal Year 2007 thru 2009 over \$3.6 million of state WLI funds have been used to implement conservation practices on private lands in Minnesota. (See WLI Projects Table in Appendix) Projects are variable and examples include payment incentives for enrollment into long term or perpetual conservation contracts/easements; prairie management to improve wildlife cover, surface water buffers, managed haying and

grazing, and managed drainage. As a provision of each grant, to the extent possible, seeding is a diverse mix of local ecotype grasses/forbs, or tree/shrubs on ecologically appropriate sites. The WLI funds have directly or indirectly impacted approximately 8200 acres of private lands. These funds have also leveraged an additional \$9.6 million of non-state funds. Roughly 3,200 acres (40%) are local ecotype plantings. All of these acres are perpetual easements.

APPENDIX

1. Letter from Governor Pawlenty



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Office of Governor Tim Pawlenty

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

March 24, 2005

The Honorable Gale Norton, Secretary
United States Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Norton:

From our work together on the designation of the Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, I know we share a mutual interest in preserving and protecting our wetlands and wildlife habitat. It is for this reason that I am seeking your support for a memorandum of understanding which will combine our efforts for the "Working Lands Initiative" in Minnesota.

As you know, until now, the numerous state and federal conservation programs that exist have operated somewhat independently. The Working Lands Initiative will identify, map and protect the state's most productive wetland complexes and focus these programs in the most comprehensive and effective manner possible.

Using new computer modeling technology developed by US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), along with the best science available, we will now be able to target state, federal and private conservation efforts to the most valuable wetland complexes in the Minnesota. Additional partners to the Initiative include Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever and the Minnesota Waterfowl Association, who have pledged nearly \$4 million, to be added to \$1.8 million that I have included in my budget proposal to the legislature.

Using this approach, I believe we can place a proper emphasis on voluntary, non-regulatory, incentive-based programs that are compatible with agriculture and conservation.

If you are in agreement with the formal designation of this effort, I will have staff from our Department of Natural Resources work with the USFWS to develop the necessary memorandum of understanding.

I look forward to your response and the opportunity to carry out this effort.

Sincerely,


Tim Pawlenty
Governor

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2. Memorandum of Understanding.

Memorandum of Understanding
between the
State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources
and
U.S. Department of The Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
in Minnesota

I. Background and Purpose.

This Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter referred to as the MOU) is made and entered into by and between the state of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources (hereinafter referred to as the DNR), acting through the Commissioner of Natural Resources, 500 Lafayette Road, Saint Paul, MN 55155-4020, and the United States of America, Department of The Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (hereinafter referred to as the FWS), acting by and through the Regional Director, Region 3, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Henry Whipple Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056.

The purpose of this MOU is to provide a basis for cooperation between the FWS and the DNR to furnish mutual aid and assistance involving landscape level conservation planning for wetland and grassland conservation/restoration primarily in the prairie regions of Minnesota.

II. Authority.

Whereas the DNR is vested with fish and wildlife related functions, powers, duties and responsibilities provided in Chapters 84, 84A, 86A, 97A, 97B, and 97C; is charged with the duties of control of lands, parks, timber, waters, minerals, fish and wildlife management, regulations and research, and shall do all things the Commissioner determines are necessary to conserve, protect and manage natural resources; and, whereas this agreement is authorized by Section 1 of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Statute 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.); and Section 7 of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956; ((16 U.S.C. 742f (a) (4)).

III. Responsibilities of Each Agency.

1. Nothing in this MOU shall be construed as limiting or expanding the statutory or regulatory responsibilities of the DNR or FWS granted to them by law, or requiring any party to expend any sum in excess of its respective appropriations. This MOU is subject to the applicable laws of the state of Minnesota and the laws and regulations of the United States and the policies of the Secretary of the Interior.

2. Each agency will work cooperatively with the other and with other state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, individuals and private landowners on landscape level planning, seeking and considering local input on priorities and using Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies, for wetland and grassland conservation within the prairie regions of Minnesota.
3. Each agency will work cooperatively to identify geographic priority areas (hereafter referred to as focus areas), for wetland and grassland conservation and restoration within the prairie regions of Minnesota.
4. Each agency will render assistance, in the form of equipment and available personnel, to implement conservation strategies that are non-regulatory, voluntary, and incentive-based which emphasize the restoration and protection of wetland and grassland systems in priority focus areas within the prairie regions of Minnesota. These conservation strategies will be implemented under the umbrella of the Working Lands Initiative. The Working Lands Initiative will identify, map and protect the state's most productive wetland complexes and focus these programs in the most comprehensive and effective manner possible to benefit a variety of wildlife species, improve water quality, and reduce runoff and sedimentation.
5. Each agency will continue and increase the sharing of management and research information.
6. Each agency will continue to allocate financial and staff resources for the restoration, protection, and management of priority wetland/grassland complexes in the prairie regions of Minnesota, and will solicit additional resources from partners and other sources to augment agency efforts.
7. Each agency will continue its excellent inter-agency cooperation and search for additional innovative ways to cooperate in the management, acquisition, and research of prairie wetland and grassland ecosystems.
8. Notwithstanding the foregoing and to the extent allowed by law, each party agrees that it shall be responsible for its own acts and omissions and the results thereof and shall not be responsible for the acts and omissions of the other party and the results thereof.

VI. Period of Performance.

This MOU, limited to a five-year period, shall become effective on the date of the last required signature and shall continue in effect unless terminated in writing or by an agency giving at least 90 days written notice, with or without cause, to the others.

Principal contacts of this Memorandum of Understanding are:

Larry R. Nelson
MN DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife
500 Lafayette Road
Saint Paul, MN 55155-4020

Phone: 651-296-0703
larry.nelson@dnr.state.mn.us

Jim Leach
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Henry Wipple Federal Building - 1 Federal Drive
Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056

Phone: 651-713-5406
jim_leach@fws.gov

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the agencies have executed this MOU as of the last date of signature shown below.

STATE OF MINNESOTA
Department of Natural Resources

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Department of The Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service

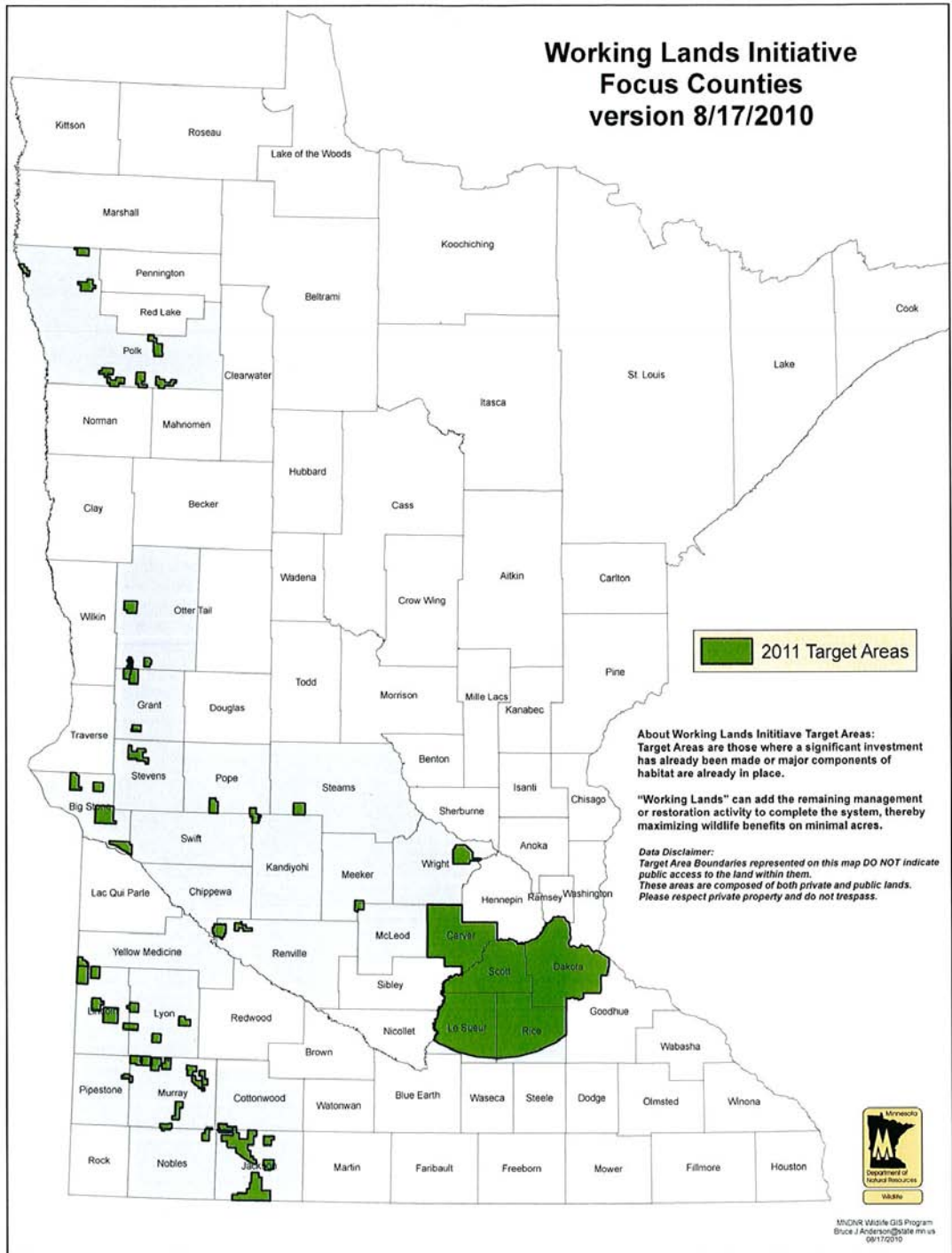
By: 
Commissioner of Natural Resources

By: 
Regional Director, Region 3

Date: July 29, 2005

Date: July 29, 2005

3. Map of Focus Counties & Target Areas



4. WLI Brochure (tri-fold)

Habitat complexes maximize benefits

Individual projects should fit within a larger functional system, in contrast to stand-alone projects.

Focused efforts will concentrate on specific **4 to 9-square mile wetland/grassland complexes**. Each complex should strive to include **40 percent total grassland acres** (one-half in permanent grassland) and **20 percent total wetland acres** (one-half in seasonal and temporary basins).

Priority areas are those where a significant investment has already been made or major components of habitat are already in place.

"Working Lands" can add the remaining management or restoration activity to complete the system, thereby maximizing wildlife benefits on minimal acres.



For more information about the Working Lands Initiative, please contact:

Tabor Hoek,
Board of Water and Soil
Resources
(507) 537-7260

Wayne Edgerton,
Minnesota DNR
(651) 259-5223



NRCS Photo

Minnesota's "Working Lands For Wildlife Initiative"

A public/private partnership for wildlife development on working farms

Goals:

**Sustainable and increasing
wildlife populations**
--AND--
**Agronomic enhancement for
landowners**



Private Lands is Key

In Minnesota's prairie pothole region the fate of wildlife is largely determined by what happens on private lands. With sufficient technical and financial assistance, **private landowners can affect landscape changes that would dramatically benefit wildlife.**

"Working Lands" brings together public, private, and non-profit organizations in local project teams to provide assistance to landowners interested in identifying economically viable conservation focus areas and strategies. These areas are identified with the benefit of GIS tools, computer models, and local knowledge.

In some cases, land might be set aside to restore wildlife habitat. Other projects might involve changes in certain agricultural practices in ways that support both wildlife and the economic vitality of the farming operation.

Guiding Principles:

- Private land holds the key to wildlife populations in the Prairie Pothole Region of Minnesota
- Food and energy production on agricultural land will be preserved.
- In some cases wildlife and agriculture share the same acres, while in others they complement one another.
- Balance agricultural production and conservation.
- Private landowners assume a wildlife management role.

-Use best available technology-models and mapping combined with local knowledge.

-Flexibility of teams to meet local needs and priorities. Local teams have decision-making authority.

Project Examples:

- Managed haying and grazing projects
- Delayed drainage of cropland creating seasonal wetlands on years when soybeans are planted at a later date
- Prairie management to increase habitat quality.
- Bio mass production for energy
- Critical buffers installed between cropland and surface waters
- Key wetlands restored or reclaimed
- Increased quantity and quality of nesting cover, including both short and long-term needs



5. WLI Projects Tables

WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE (WLI) PROJECTS 2007 TO 2010 F.Y. 2007

Focus County	Target Area	Project #	WLI Funds		Dollars Leveraged	*Acres Impacted	**\$/acre	Plan		Notes:
			Allocated	Used				Updated	Complete	
Big Stone		D4K39	\$82,000.00	\$81,972.00	\$254,028.00	192	\$1,751.00	11/25/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP contracts
Delta Waterfowl	All	D72E9	70,000.00	70,000.00	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	10/15/08	yes	Hen house duck nesting structures
Grant		D1G65	70,000.00	53,500.00	\$89,500.00	54	\$2,658.00	11/18/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP contracts
Grant		D1G65	15,300.00	15,300.00	\$15,600.00	N.A.	N.A.	11/18/09	yes	Workshop, landowner contacts, mapping
Grant & WOT		D1G64	128,000.00	128,000.00	\$81,558.00	78	\$2,687.00	12/4/09	yes	Perpetual easements
Jackson	All in county	D4U67	90,000.00	61,158.00	\$889,489.00	323	\$2,943.00	6/13/08	yes	CREP perpetual easements
Lincoln	Ash Lake, Arco	D4Q54	243,000.00	240,847.00	\$234,463.00	271	\$1,754.00	9/21/09	yes	Perpetual easements
Murray		D4S65	132,000.00	132,000.00	\$603,000.00	284	\$528.00	12/1/09	yes	CREP perpetual easements
Otter Tail West	Lightning Lake	D1F59	81,000.00	11,700.00	\$56,939.00	39	\$1,760.00	10/15/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP contracts
Pope (MCC)		D1G65000	25,000.00	21,000.00	N.A.	136	\$154.00	2/10/10	yes	Invasive species control
Pope (SFA)	Langhei	D1G65	27,000.00	26,998.00	N.A.	400	\$43.00	9/17/10	yes	Managed grazing/invasive species control
Stevens		D1G66000	55,000.00	55,000.00	\$579,000.00	245	\$2,588.00	2/9/10	yes	CRP contracts & CREP perpetual easements
Total			\$1,018,300.00	\$897,475.00	\$2,803,577.00	2022				

*Acres impacted = the total acreage that each project directly impacts. This acreage is approximate. ** This figure represents the combination of WLI funds and the leveraged funds divided by the acres impacted.

**WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE PROJECTS 2007 TO 2010
F.Y. 2008**

Focus County	Target Area	Project #	WLI Funds Allocated	WLI Funds Used	Dollars Leveraged	*Acres Impacted	**\$/acre	Plan Updated	Complete	Notes:
Big Stone	Correll	D4K45	108,000.00	98,728.00	288,622.00	263	1,473.00	9/1/10	yes	Prairie Bank easement & seed
Big Stone	Otreys/Berry	D4K46	114,717.00	113,091.00	222,812.00	165	2,036.00	9/1/10	yes	Market value adjustment for CP-38
Delta Waterfowl	All	D7Z29	116,000.00	116,000.00	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	9/15/10	yes	Hen House duck nesting structures
Jackson	Heron Lake	D4U76	100,500.00	100,500.00	228,385.00	116	2,835.00	9/1/10	yes	Market value adjustment for CP-38 Market value adjustment for CRP & RIM
Lincoln	Arco	D4Q63	371,252.00	371,250.00	365,039.00	516	1,427.00	9/1/10	yes	Reserve
Lincoln/Lyon	All in County	D4Q64	75,500.00	75,500.00	76,835.00	97	1,570.00	9/21/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CP-38
Murray #1	Lake Oycar/Graham Lake	D4S75	76,546.00	73,092.00	412,259.00	496	979.00	9/1/10	yes	CRP II and RIM perpetual easements
Folk #1	Grand Marais Creek	D1S39	50,500.00	50,500.00	215,903.00	61	4,367.00	11/19/09	yes	Riparian corridor restoration
Pope #1	Grazing Demonstration	D1G70	22,100.00	22,100.00	2,897.00	59	45.00	9/7/10	yes	Grassland/prairie restoration
Stevens	Donnelly	D1G66	15,500.00		191,000.00	75	2,753.00	2/9/10	no	CRP II perpetual easements Biomass demonstration for Morris University
Stevens, Grant, et al	Grassland Management	D1G69	29,498.00							
Total:			\$1,080,113	\$1,020,761	\$2,009,752.00	2348				

*Acres impacted = the total acreage that each project directly impacts. This acreage is approximate. **This figure represents the combination of WLI funds and the leveraged funds, divided by acres impacted.

WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE PROJECTS 2007 TO 2010
F.Y. 2009

Focus County	Target Area	Project #	WU Funds Allocated	WU Funds Used	Dollars Leveraged	* Acres Impacted	** \$/acre	Plan Updated	Complete	Notes:
Delta Waterfowl	All	D72E9	\$120,000.00	\$120,000.00	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	10/15/09	yes	Hen House duck nesting structures
Grant #1	Stony/Ash Lake	D1G73	\$49,789.00	\$49,771.00	\$324,097.00	159	\$2,351.00	11/16/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP Contracts
Grant #2	Stony/Ash-Kube/Swift	D1G76	\$92,801.00	\$92,801.00	\$1,121,000.00	427	\$2,843.00	11/16/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP Contracts
Grant #3	Stony/Ash & Big Lake	D1G78	\$57,410.00	\$57,410.00	\$424,239.00	196	\$2,457.00	11/16/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP Contracts
Grant #4	Kube/Swift	D1G79	\$140,256.00	\$140,256.00	\$624,625.00	310	\$2,467.00	11/16/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP Contracts
Lincoln/Lyon #2	All In County	D4Q66	\$100,500.00	\$100,500.00	\$196,620.00	115	\$2,584.00	9/21/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP Contracts
Lincoln/Lyon #3	All in County	D4Q69	\$200,000.00	\$198,851.00	\$367,588.00	212	\$2,672.00	9/21/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CP-38
Murray #2	Lake Maria	D4579	\$323,980.00	\$323,980.00	\$217,440.00	140	\$3,867.00	9/1/10	yes	Market value adjustment for perpetual RIM easement
Otter Tail West #1	Mud Lake	D1F61	\$107,500.00	\$64,822.00	\$58,723.00	59	\$2,094.00	10/15/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP & Roadsides Market value adjustment WRP/RIM perpetual easement
Otter Tail West #2	Mud Lake	D1F62	\$9,650.00	\$9,450.00	\$30,312.00	17	\$2,353.00	9/1/10	yes	Market value adjustment for RIM perpetual easement
Otter Tail West #3	Mud Lake/Halderson	D1F81	\$51,000.00	\$51,000.00	\$51,589.00	45	\$2,275.00	9/1/10	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP-38
Polk #2	Grand Marais Creek	D1576	\$24,329.00	\$24,329.00	\$99,900.00	62	\$1,991.00	9/1/10	yes	Riparian corridor restoration
Pope #2	Grazing Demonstration	D1G74	\$46,000.00	\$43,521.00	\$82,350.00	1,009	\$125.00	9/7/10	yes	Grassland/prairie restoration
Renville/Chip. #1	Hawk Creek	D4T44	\$1,070.00	\$1,070.00	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	11/17/09	yes	Landowner workshop
Renville/Chip. #2	County Line	D4T45	\$108,150.00	\$108,150.00	\$381,661.00	204	\$2,401.00	9/1/10	yes	Market value adjustment for CP-38
Scott	Biomass Energy #1	D3N06	\$200,000.00	\$196,176.00	\$30,872.00	104	\$2,181.00	9/1/10	yes	Grassland for biomass production
Stevens #1	Eldorado/Cosh	D1G72	\$32,040.00	\$32,040.00	\$471,000.00	158	\$3,184.00	9/15/10	yes	WRP perpetual easements
Stevens, et al	Grazing Demonstration	D1G75	\$12,000.00						no	Grassland monitoring
Traverse	Arthur	D1G77	\$46,000.00	\$4,966.00	\$32,793.00	18.8	\$2,008.00	9/7/10	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP Contracts
Wright #1	Pelican Lake	D3F51	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$23,419.00	30	\$1,114.00	9/1/10	yes	Perpetual wetland easements
Wright #2	Pelican Lake	D3F52	\$21,000.00		\$200,937.00	100	\$2,219.00	12/4/09	yes	Market value adjustment for CRP Contracts
Wright #3	Pelican Lake	D3F53	\$69,000.00	\$69,000.00	\$101,188.00	455	\$374.00	9/1/10	yes	Conservation practice payments
Total:			\$1,822,475.00	\$1,698,093.00	\$4,840,353.00	3820.8				

Acres impacted = the total acreage that each project directly impacts. This acreage is approximate. **This figure represents the combination of WU funds and the leveraged funds, divided by acres impacted.

WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE PROJECTS 2007 TO 2009-Summary

Fiscal Year	WLI Funds Used	Other Leveraged \$\$	Acres Impacted
2007	\$897,475.00	\$2,803,577.00	2022
2008	\$1,020,761.00	\$2,003,752.00	2348
2009	\$1,698,093.00	\$4,840,353.00	3821
Total	\$3,616,329.00	\$9,647,682.00	8191

ABBREVIATIONS

BWSR	Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources
DNR	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
FSA	USDA-Farm Service Agency
FWS	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
HAPET	Habitat And Population Evaluation Team
NRCS	USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
RIM	Reinvest in Minnesota
SWCD	Soil & Water Conservation District
TA	Target Area
WLI	Working Lands Initiative