Minnesota’s Remaining Native Prairie
A Century After the Public Land Survey

Background: Natural Vegetation of Minnesota Recorded at the Time of the Public Land Survey: 1847-1908

1 Upland Prairie, Wet Prairie, Savanna, and Prairie Complexes mapped by the Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) as of March 2017. Some mapped areas in the Tallgrass Aspen Parklands are large complexes that include aspen groves and rich fens in addition to prairie/savanna. Also, some prairie communities represented on this map may have been destroyed since the time of their documentation by MBS.

2 Adapted from Marschner, F.J. 1974. The original vegetation of Minnesota, compiled from U.S. General Land Office Survey notes [map]. 1:500,000. Redrafted from the 1930 original by P.J. Burwell and S.J. Haas under the direction of M.L. Heinselman. St. Paul: North Central Forest Experiment Station, United States Department of Agriculture. Marschner included native prairies and savannas primarily in the following categories: Prairie (15,814,000 acres); Wet Prairies, Marshes and Sloughs (3,326,000 acres); Brush Prairie (1,405,000 acres); and Oak Openings and Barrens (3,623,000 acres). In the Laurentian Mixed Forest Province, Wet Prairies, Marshes and Sloughs mainly comprises marshes and sloughs. If wet prairies were present in this province, they were uncommon and likely restricted to western and southern regions bordering the Tallgrass Aspen Parklands and Eastern Broadleaf Forest provinces.

GIS data for many of the native prairies and savannas depicted on this map are available in shapefile format as “MNDNR Native Prairies” and “MCBS Railroad Rights-of-Way Prairies” on the Minnesota Geospatial Commons at www.gisdata.mn.gov. Information on MBS procedures for mapping Minnesota’s prairies, savannas and other native plant communities is available at www.mndnr.gov/mbs. Map is also available online at: http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/mcbs/prairie_map.pdf