

# Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan – Recent Accomplishments



The Glacial Lakes Prairie Core Area: A recent prairie summit featured a tour of sites displaying an array of conservation actions such as wetland reserves, conservation grazing, red cedar control, and prairie bank easements.



DNR Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Roving Habitat Crews enhance approximately 15,000 acres of grasslands each year.



Grassland ecosystems are improved with proper grazing management. Planned grazing can increase plant diversity and habitat structure, which benefits wildlife.



Western Prairie Fringed Orchid  
(*Platanthera praeclara*)

Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) staff have used nested levels of monitoring to track the status and life history of Minnesota's populations of the federally-threatened Western Prairie Fringed Orchid for over 25 years. For a decade, MBS has followed the species' development from emergence to seed dispersal at two sites. During the 2013 field season MBS expanded its efforts by engaging researchers to study associated mycorrhizal fungi and genetics of Minnesota populations.

MBS, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and DNR managers are collaborating on vegetation and selected animal species monitoring related to grazing management at Caribou WMA (Kittson County), Lac Qui Parle WMA/Chippewa Prairie Preserve (Swift and Chippewa counties) and Hole-in-the-Mountain WMA (Lincoln County).

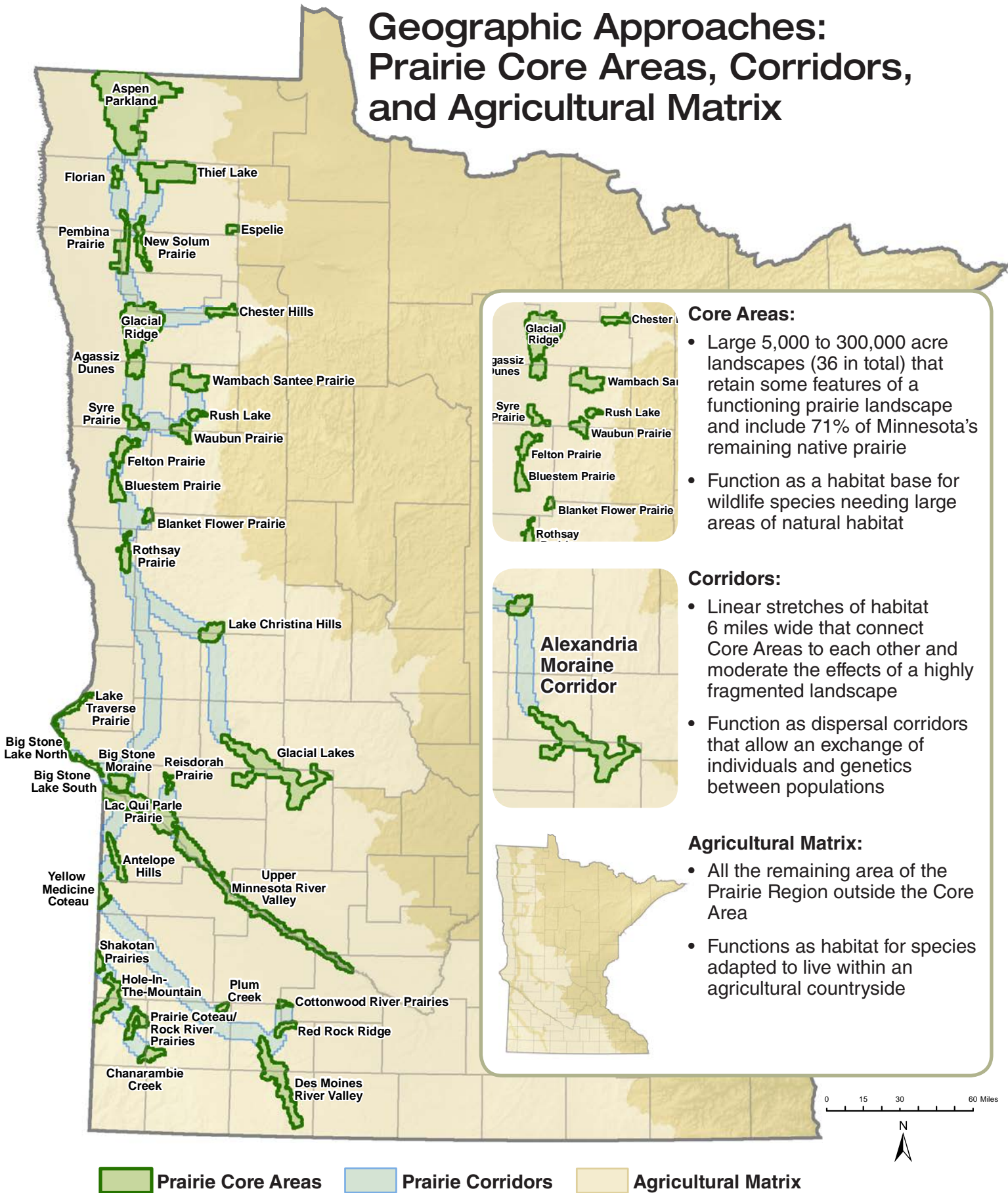


## Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

A habitat plan for native prairie, grassland, and wetlands in the Prairie Region of western Minnesota

available on the internet: [http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/mcbs/mn\\_prairie\\_conservation\\_plan.pdf](http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/mcbs/mn_prairie_conservation_plan.pdf)

# Geographic Approaches: Prairie Core Areas, Corridors, and Agricultural Matrix



**Core Areas:**

- Large 5,000 to 300,000 acre landscapes (36 in total) that retain some features of a functioning prairie landscape and include 71% of Minnesota's remaining native prairie
- Function as a habitat base for wildlife species needing large areas of natural habitat

**Corridors:**

- Linear stretches of habitat 6 miles wide that connect Core Areas to each other and moderate the effects of a highly fragmented landscape
- Function as dispersal corridors that allow an exchange of individuals and genetics between populations

**Agricultural Matrix:**

- All the remaining area of the Prairie Region outside the Core Area
- Functions as habitat for species adapted to live within an agricultural countryside

*Minnesota lies at the intersection of North America's prairie, eastern broadleaf forest, and boreal forest/peatlands. Prairie habitats once covered one-third of the state but presently less than 2% remain.*

### Prairie Conservation Plan—why is this needed?

- Conservation of the grassland/wetland landscape is needed due to accelerating demands for clean water, energy and arable land. Habitat fragmentation, loss of plant and animal species, degradation of soil and water resources, and invasive species are a few of the immediate threats to this system.
- Funding for natural resource conservation is strongly supported in Minnesota. One example is the passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment in 2008.
- A unified 25-year plan by multiple partners provides a more efficient future direction while also building on past conservation actions of a wide array of organizations and agencies.

### The Strategies

**Protection:** Maintain habitat through conservation easements on private land or acquisition of public land.

**Restoration:** Grassland and wetland reconstruction to contribute to functional systems and viable species populations.

**Enhancement:** Activities that improve habitats and functionality of a grassland or wetland (prescribed burning, conservation grazing/haying, control of invasive species).

### The Work

- Coordination of conservation and management strategies to increase efficiency through this prairie partnership.
- Implementation by local prairie technical teams.
- Monitor progress toward grassland and wetland goals.

