

## MINNESOTA DNR RECEIVES 2005 LIP GRANTS TOTALING \$905,000

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, DIVISION OF ECOLOGICAL SERVICES

### Minnesota's Landowner Incentive Program

MN DNR's Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) was awarded LIP grants totaling \$905,000 for two years. Minnesota was one of over 40 states and U.S territories to receive a share of the \$19 million in competitive funding for states and territorial fish and wildlife agencies under the Landowner Incentive Program. LIP grants are funded through Congressional appropriations from the Soil and Water Conservation Fund. A match of at least 25% from a non-federal source is required. The funding will allow MN DNR to continue to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners who wish to voluntarily manage their land to benefit plants and animals listed by the state or federal governments as endangered, threatened or special concern while continuing to engage in traditional land-use practices.

#### What's new under Minnesota's 2005 grants?

A **pilot monitoring project** to be conducted on Prairie Species At Risk project sites will result in the development and implementation of monitoring plans for up to ten prairie sites. These site-level plans will identify and measure specific indicators of habitat quality for target species and serve as templates for future monitoring. Monitoring will allow DNR to evaluate over time the degree to which LIP habitat enhancement projects meet conservation targets.

The **Topeka shiner project** is incorporated into the LIP Prairie Species at Risk program element. Prairie Species at Risk has DNR-LIP staff in southwest Minnesota who are experienced in developing and implementing habitat enhancement/restoration projects. This change will reduce administrative costs, streamline the application and project implementation process for the landowners, and facilitate partnership coordination. Landowners, or organizations working with private landowners, interested in applying to LIP for technical assistance in developing management plans to benefit Topeka shiner habitat or for cost share assistance with project implementation should contact Peter Buessler (contact information page 4).

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## Working ranch provides habitat for rare species

### QUARTERLY UPDATE SPOTLIGHT ON... Prairie Species at Risk

#### B-B Ranch

A highlight of this year's Prairie Species at Risk project is the completion of a 'patch-burn' grazing plan for the B-B ranch. The grazing system should improve habitat conditions for the ten listed species (three butterfly, four bird, and three vascular plant) occurring on



DNR Ecologist Nancy Sather, NRCS Grazing Specialist Mark Hayek, and B-B Ranch owner Brad Bjerken

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the ranch. B-B Ranch is a 3,500-acre, privately owned ranch that forms the core of a complex of state, county, federal and other public prairie lands covering approximately 10,000 acres in northern Clay County. The area, known as the 'Felton Prairie', is one of the most important dry prairie sites in Minnesota. Felton prairie provides habitat for 6 rare butterfly species, 4 bird species, one small mammal species, and 12 listed plant species. DNR zoologists believe Felton Prairie contains the only population of prairie vole in the state for which the prospects for long-term persistence are good. In addition to dry prairie, a gradation of mesic to wet prairie occurs along the slopes and base of the beach ridges as well as in depressions and swales between the ridges. Three calcareous fens occur in this landscape complex.

The patch burn grazing system being implemented at B-B ranch is the first of its kind in Minnesota. This is a fire-induced, rotational grazing scheme that increases structural heterogeneity of native grasslands and provides economic returns for the landowner. LIP Prairie Management Specialist, Shelley Becklund worked with the landowner, NRCS Grazing Specialist Mark Hayek, and Concordia College Asst Professor Greg Hoch – formerly from the Konza Prairie Long Term Ecological Research Station– to develop the plan.

As part of the plan, portions of the adjacent DNR Felton Wildlife Management Area are being fenced to initiate a 'grass banking' program with the B-B Ranch. This will allow the landowner to graze portions of the WMA in order to rest his pasturelands, allowing time for rejuvenation. In return, the grazing will benefit grassland renovation efforts on the WMA.

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A few of the listed species expected to benefit from habitat enhancement on the B-B



Dakota skipper  
(*Hesperia dacotae*)



Powesheik skipper  
(*Oarisma powesheik*)



Assiniboia skipper  
(*Hesperia comma assiniboia*)



Greater prairie chicken  
(*Tympanuchus cupido*)



Marbled godwit  
(*Limosa fedoa*)



Chestnut-collared longspur  
(*Calcarius ornatus*)



Baird's sparrow  
(*Ammodramus bairdii*)



Loggerhead shrike  
(*Lanius ludovicianus*)

Photo credits:

Dakota skipper, Powesheik skipper, and Assiniboia skipper: Robert Dana; Greater prairie chicken, Carrol Winther; Marbled godwit, George Jameson; Chestnut-collared longspur, James Ownby; Baird's sparrow Greg Lasley; Loggerhead shrike, David Menske/USFWS

## B-B continued from page 2



B-B Ranch, northern Clay Co, MN  
(Wind turbines in background).

In addition to the grazing plan, MN DNR is participating in a coordinated, multi-agency weed control effort with Clay County weed inspectors, township board members and other resource and educational agencies to identify and control problem weed species on private and public lands in Clay County. This project is an outgrowth of a LIP funded project to address a leafy spurge infestation on the B-B Ranch and adjacent private lands at Felton Prairie.

## LIP FY05 Performance Report

On July 1, MN LIP submitted our annual performance report to the USFWS. FY05 (July 1, 2204—June 30, 2005) LIP accomplishments include:

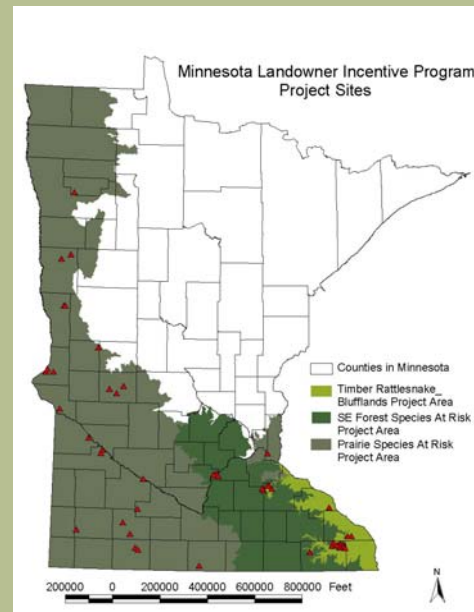
Sixty-four (64) landowners are participating in LIP habitat enhancement, restoration, or protection projects. Forty (40) LIP landowner agreements were signed in FY05.

In FY05, **708 acres** were protected through LIP prairie bank easements. LIP financial assistance resulted in **1,478 acres** of habitat enhancement or restoration for plants and animals on the federal or the state list of threatened, endangered, and special concern species. Habitat management practices in FY05 include:

- ⇒ 595 acres prescribed burns
- ⇒ 456 acres exotic, invasive species control
- ⇒ 42 acres prairie restoration
- ⇒ 2 streambank stabilization projects protect approximately 10 acres of habitat for Minnesota endemic dwarf trout lily from sediment.
- ⇒ 1 grazing plan covering 3,500 acres

In addition,

- ⇒ 41 landowner stewardship/management plans were developed in FY05.
- ⇒ 100 site-level ecological assessments/surveys were conducted
- ⇒ 218 LIP eligible landowners were contacted by direct mail



Visit the MN LIP website at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lip/index.html> for previous issues of MN LIP Update and other program information.

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Minnesota Department of  
Natural Resources,  
Division of Ecological  
Services

LIP is a grant program administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Ecological Services is responsible for the implementation of LIP in Minnesota. Private landowners, individually or as a group, who wish to voluntarily manage their land to benefit federally or state-listed plants or animals can apply to LIP for assistance in developing habitat management plans and reimbursement grants for habitat enhancement and restoration. Organizations working with private landowners are also eligible to apply. LIP is not a land acquisition program and fee-title acquisition is not an eligible use of LIP funds. Each of the LIP elements (Prairie, SE Forest, and Timber Rattlesnake-Bluff Prairie) has a program manager, priority implementation areas, and project selection criteria. Please contact the Program Manager or the LIP Coordinator for additional information or visit our web site: : <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lip/index.html>

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