

A Successful First Year for LIP

Minnesota's Landowner Incentive Program

Twenty-eight landowners receive assistance to enhance or restore habitat to benefit plants and animals at risk in Minnesota

1,535 acres of habitat work completed in Fiscal Year 2004 and more in the works

Highlights from LIP's first fiscal year:

- MN DNR develops and begins implementation of the Landowner Incentive Program (Page 4)
- 28 landowners received technical assistance and reimbursement grants for voluntarily developing and implementing management plans that benefit at-risk species.
- 1,535 acres of habitat improvement were completed.
- 181 landowners and other stakeholders participated in six Timber rattlesnake educational workshops in SE Minnesota.
- 17 site assessments were conducted.
- 105 eligible landowners were notified of LIP through direct mail.



LIP utilizes Natural Heritage data on listed species occurrences, Minnesota County Biological Survey data on areas of high biodiversity, and other plant community and landscape information to identify priority areas in which to offer LIP assistance to eligible private landowners.

Timber rattlesnake project begins work with landowners

On a September evening private landowners in the Rushford-Peterson area of SE Minnesota heard Jaime Edwards, DNR Nongame Wildlife Specialist, explain how LIP can assist them in restoring bluff prairies on their property to benefit several listed species, particularly the Timber rattlesnake.

Fourteen landowners applied for LIP assistance and enrollment of several other landowners is pending. Bluff prairie restoration includes reducing the amount of woody species (particularly

Eastern Red Cedar), exotic and invasive species control, and prescribed burns. Approximately 227 acres of habitat restoration work will occur around den sites and within other high quality areas utilized by the snakes. Much of the work must be done in late fall and winter after the snakes have gone into hibernation, but before snow cover makes working on the bluffs impossible.

Happy Holidays





The Timber rattlesnake (Crotalus horridus) is a state threatened species found exclusively in the southeastern Minnesota counties of Goodhue, Fillmore, Olmsted, Wabasha and Winona. Many historic populations have been extirpated, and remaining populations tend to be small, widely distributed, and a significant portion are on private lands.

SE Forest Project Update

A comprehensive GIS assessment identified four priority areas within the Southeast Forest Project Area where LIP will begin working with eligible, private landowners. Over 60 landowners were notified of LIP and invited to apply for assistance in developing management plans to benefit state- and federally-listed plants and animals and financial incentives to assist with plan implementation. Approximately 20 management plans and 10 habitat enhancement projects will be implemented between now and fall-winter 2005.

Five (5) on-site field evaluations with private landowners were conducted this spring and summer. Habitat conditions, plants and animals present on the sites, and management activities needed to enhance or protect the habitat were evaluated. Streambank stabilization and invasive exotic species control are examples of LIP eligible practices.

The Minnesota endemic Dwarf trout lily is one example of a federally-listed plant that could benefit from LIP assisting landowners with the implementation of streambank stabilization projects. Land cover changes in the Little Cannon watershed have increased stream flow and intensity. Changes in stream flow has resulted in increased bank erosion and sedi-

LIP Winter 2005 activities

- Prairie Species at Risk Project will solicit applications in January from eligible private landowners for LIP habitat enhancement/restoration assistance. Projects will be implemented Spring - Fall 2005 (Page 3)
- Timber rattlesnake bluff prairie restoration work begins on 14 landowner sites in SE MN (Page 1)
- SE Forest Project continues to work with landowners on management plans (Page 2)
- USFWS will solicit Request for Proposals for LIP. Congress recently approved \$22 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for LIP conservation grants to states and tribes. The state agency with the primary responsibility for fish and wildlife is responsible for submitting proposals. MN LIP (currently funded through Sept. 2005) will apply for continued funding

mentation in some areas. When stream banks overflow sediment can settle on Dwarf trout lily plants, destroying the plants.



Minnesota Dwarf Trout Lily (Erythronium pro-pullans) is a Minnesota endemic on the federal endangered species list. The plant is found in Rice, Goodhue, and Steele Counties where its preferred habitat is northwest or northeast-facing slopes dominated by maple and basswood and adjoining floodplains dominated by elm and cottonwood.

Prairie Species at Risk Project Update

Twenty-five private landowners are receiving LIP assistance to enhance or restore their prairie to benefit state- and federally-listed plants and animals and other wildlife. Natural Heritage records list known occurrences of 29 state- or federally-listed plants and animals within 19 of the 25 sites. The other 6 landowners have listed species adjacent to or in the near vicinity of their property.

Twenty-two of the 25 landowners are enrolled in the Prairie Bank Easement Program.

Examples of habitat enhance practices include:

- 669 acres of woody encroachment management on 22 sites
- 43 acres of prairie restoration, including reconstruction and interseeding on 6 sites
- 1,394 acres prescribed burns on 25 sites

This winter LIP eligible landowners will again be invited to apply for habitat enhancement or restoration assistance. Eligibility criteria includes:

- The project must improve habitat for listed species

Topeka Shiner Project Update



Topeka shiner is a small minnow found in small to mid-size prairie streams. 234 stream miles in Lincoln, Pipestone and Rock counties has been designated by the USFWS as critical habitat.

Minnesota's Topeka shiner LIP project has made steady progress over the past year. Designation of critical habitat for the Topeka shiner by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was completed on July 27, 2004. Since over 72% of the designated stream mileage lies within Min-

nesota and is almost all under private ownership, LIP has enormous potential to contribute to the recovery of this endangered species.

Project staff continue to focus on developing a local pilot project that can be used to demonstrate the benefits of working with private landowners to benefit Topeka shiner habitat. Staff are developing specifications for practices, including establishing riparian buffers, restoring in-stream habitat, enhancing off-channel habitat, and modifying grazing practices to reduce erosion and streambed degradation.



- The property and/or the proposed project area must have a long-term prairie stewardship plan or equivalent. LIP staff can assist landowners develop stewardship plans.
- The landowner must maintain projects for an agreed upon time period.

Private landowners or groups working with private landowners who meet these eligibility guidelines can call or email Peter Buessler 218-739-7576 X240, or Peter.Buessler@dnr.state.mn.us and request to be contacted for the next application round. Application packets will also be available on the DNR's web site www.dnr.state.mn.us around the beginning of January, 2005.

Topeka shiner project con't

Project staff are exploring with federal, state, and private conservation programs that operate in SW Minnesota the best ways for LIP to work with them to deliver the greatest conservation benefits and avoid duplication of effort.

In September, LIP staff member Rachel Hopper hosted a meeting in Slayton, MN that included representatives from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), DNR, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Attendees shared information about existing private landowner programs and projects. As a follow-up BWSR and DNR staff met in November to explore specific ways that LIP could complement the Conservation Reserve Program and to view areas within the LIP-priority streamsheds.

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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 state- or federally-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 four LIP Projects has a program manager, priority implementation areas, and project selection criteria. Please contact the Program Manager or the LIP Coordinator for additional information.

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