Department of Natural Resources Fact Sheet

2008 CAPITAL BUDGET
Native Prairie Easements and Development/Conservation and Protection
Governor's Recommendation: $3,000,000

It is needed because

Less than one percent, or approximately 150,000 acres, of the original 18 million acres of native prairie remains in Minnesota. Native prairie serves a critical function in providing key wildlife habitat and environmental benefits, supporting working landscapes through grazing and haying, and providing new sources of biomass for renewable energy production. Prairies also sequester carbon in grass biomass and in soils. Investments in native prairie conservation will protect Minnesota's most endangered natural habitat, support development of new conservation-based energy sources, and play a part in a comprehensive strategy for mitigating climate change and its effects. This request supports Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group priority AFW-4: Expanded Use of Biomass Feedstocks for Electricity, Heat, or Steam Production.

Major project elements

This funding will work to accomplish three critical outcomes:

1) Acquire approximately 1,000 acres of native prairie conservation easements through the Native Prairie Bank (NPB) program. Currently, the program protects about 6,100 acres of privately-owned native prairie. This funding will accelerate protection efforts to meet a 10-year goal of protecting 20,000-30,000 acres of native prairie. ($1.5 million)

2) Protect approximately 300 acres of native prairie through acquisition and development of Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs). Currently, about 12,700 acres of native prairie are protected as SNAs. ($1.3 million)

3) Increase the availability of local seed stock for prairie reestablishment and bio-energy development through the accelerated harvest of native prairie seed from SNAs and through partnership with landowners on NPB sites. Local native prairie seed will be used to reestablish native prairie on SNAs and NPBs. These restored sites would be suitable to serve as foundation seed sources to supply seed growers for prairie restoration and biomass feedstock purposes. This source of diverse, local native prairie seed is critical to meet anticipated demand for supplying native prairie plants for bio-energy development. Prairie biofuel systems can reduce fossil fuel emissions while enhancing carbon sinks. ($200,000)

Priority-setting

To ensure conservation of the highest quality native prairie, a systematic evaluation process determines:

- Size, quality and diversity of the native prairie;
- Occurrence of or suitable habitat for rare species;
- Tract location in relation to other protected prairie;
- Potential for long-term habitat management and enhancement of the site;
- Landowner interest in maintaining prairie (easements only); and
- Threats to tract.

Project locations

Native prairie complexes targeted for protection and restoration (see map on back of this page) include:

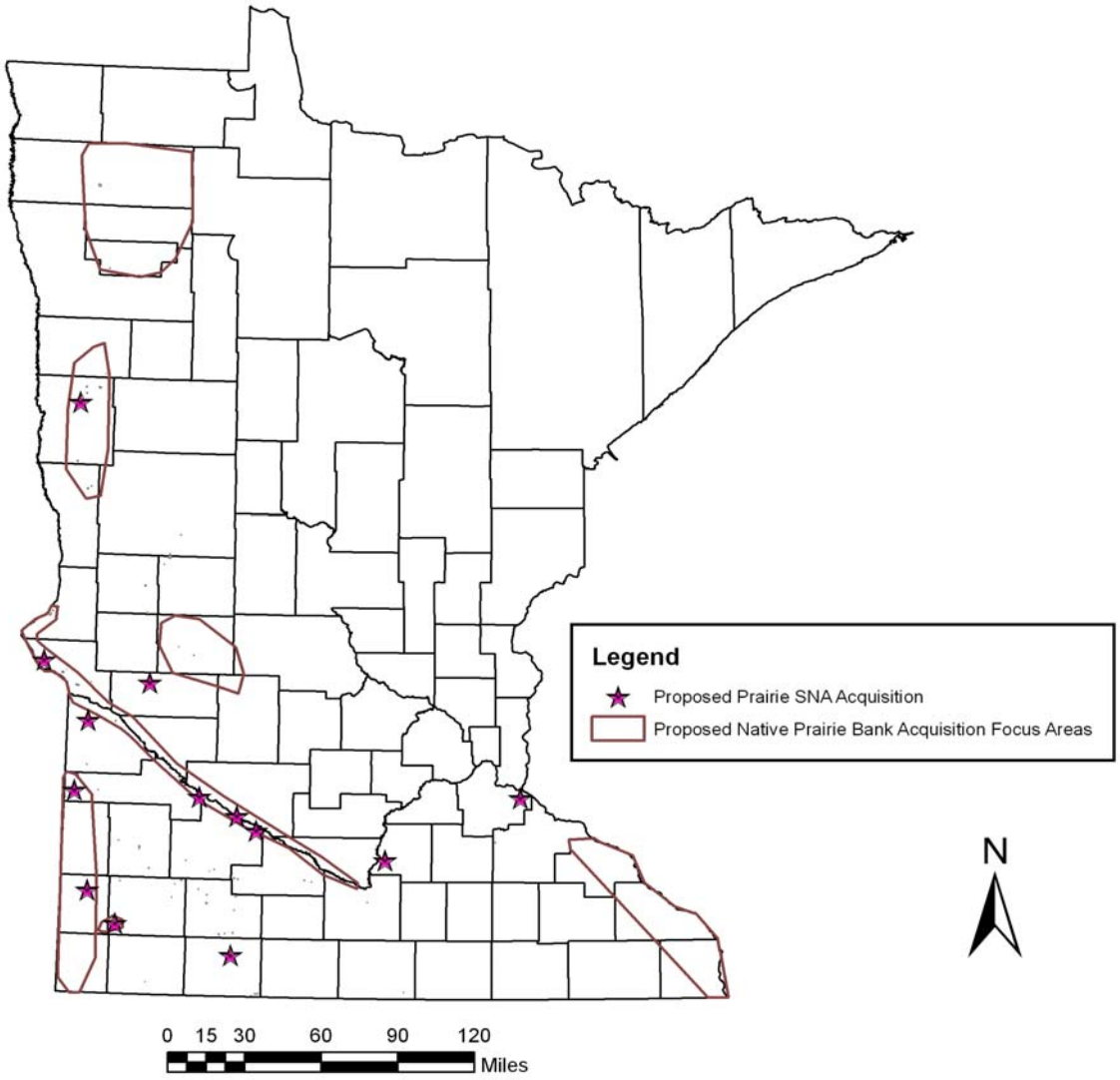
1. Upper Minnesota River Valley
2. Chanarambie Creek area of Murray County
3. Southwestern Coteau Prairies
4. Glacial Lake Agassiz Beach Ridges
5. Alexandria Moraine
6. Aspen Prairie Parkland in NW MN

Key measures and outcomes

- 1,000 acres of conservation easements acquired on privately-owned native prairie
- 300 acres of native prairie acquired and designate as Scientific and Natural Areas
- 20 percent increase in harvest and planting of local native prairie seed on SNAs and through partnership with private landowners on Native Prairie Bank sites

DNR Capital Project Priorities as of January 2008

SNA Acquisition
Proposed Prairie Acquisitions



For further information contact:
Margaret Booth, Supervisor
Division of Ecological Resources
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25
St. Paul, MN 55155
(651) 259-5088
peggy.booth@dnr.state.mn.us

February 7, 2008