

Resources for Prairie/Habitat restoration projects

I've collected some information about the various government and private groups that can provide resources, advice, seeds and plants, and funding for prairie/habitat restoration projects. These programs (and the contact info) can change over time; the info I have provided is current as of this writing. Hopefully this can provide a starting point for anyone interested in habitat improvement. There may be other sources out there that I have not included in this list, so don't hesitate to do some independent searching!

Government sources

U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USF&W)
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
 Farm Service Agency (FSA)
MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

Private sources

The Nature Conservancy
<https://www.nature.org/en-us/>
MINNESOTA/NORTH DAKOTA/SOUTH DAKOTA
1101 West River Parkway, Suite 200
Minneapolis MN 55415-1291
ph. [612-331-0750](tel:612-331-0750)

Pheasants Forever
<https://www.pheasantsforever.org/>
The National Wild Turkey Federation
<http://www.nwtf.org/>

Seed/plant sources

Shooting Star (Spring Grove MN)
<https://www.shootingstarnativeseed.com/>
Prairie Moon (Winona MN)
<https://www.prairiemoon.com/>
Prairie Nursery (Westfield WI)
<https://www.prairienursery.com/>

USF&W

<https://www.fws.gov/partners/>

Contact person:

Sheldon Myerchin
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
434 Great Oak Drive
Waite Park, MN 56387
(320) 252-4682 x11
sheldon_myerchin@fws.gov

S. 260 (109th): Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act

"S. 260 — 109th Congress: Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act." www.GovTrack.us. 2005. May 6, 2019
<<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/109/s260>>

A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore, enhance, and manage private land to improve fish and wildlife habitats through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

...the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, which serves as the Service's premier tool for conservation delivery on privately owned land. The Program, which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners, tribes and schools on a voluntary basis to help meet the habitat needs of federal trust species. Field biologists work one-on-one with landowners and partners to plan, implement and monitor activities.

Notes: Funding comes (I believe) from the Farm Bill. I talked to USF&W representatives at their booth at a Pheasants Forever national meeting. They passed my contact info to the local office in Winona, and a biologist called me a couple weeks later. The local USF&W biologist came out to our property, looked it over, and wrote a brief summary and proposal for parcels that would qualify for the program. They considered sections as small as 3 acres, but bigger is better and has more chance of getting funding. We chose to include only a 9 acre section. Their program was they had funds available and could guarantee acceptance that year, unlike other programs that required a competitive application process with less than 50% chance of being approved.

The program is basically 10 year contract with a cost-share, guidance and manpower provided by USF&W. The biologist put together a seed list (which we could edit) including a diverse mix of prairie grasses and forbs. We collected additional seed from our property to supplement the list. USF&W helped cutting and burning cedars on the field edges, bought the seed and provided the drill to plant. We are responsible for spraying, burning, planting and mowing over the duration of the contract. The contract can be terminated early if USF&W is repaid partial costs (prorated for the remaining term of the contract).

The 10ft Truax drill for planting was provided by the Winona SWCD in Lewiston. I have been told this drill may be available for other rentals, even outside their district, as long as it is not committed for projects within their district. For info, here is the contact at that office:

Daryl Buck
District Manager
Winona County SWCD
507-523-2171 ext. 112

USDA/NRCS/FSA

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/national/home/>

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/initiatives/>

There are a number of programs available ranging from CRP (qualified farmland) to pollinator and monarch butterfly programs (more flexible regarding qualifying lands). These programs are generally directed at working farmland, but I found the regional biologists helpful and willing to try to qualify a project depending on the current land use. I investigated only the EQIP program (below) although other programs are also available for certain types of land.

Local Office: MN counties are served by different local USDA offices. This link will help find your appropriate office.

<https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?>

[service=page/CountyMap&state=MN&stateName=Minnesota&stateCode=27](https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?service=page/CountyMap&state=MN&stateName=Minnesota&stateCode=27)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.

MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/lawns-legumes-program-creating-habitat-mn-pollinators>

The MN Legislature recently approved funds (about \$900 thousand) for the Lawns to Legumes program that is targeted to benefit the Rusty Patched Bumblebee. These funds are expected to be available in the spring of 2020 and could pay 75% of the costs to eligible homeowners to include pollinator-friendly plants in their lawns and yards. See the link above for a map of the areas targeted, largely surrounding urbanized areas in SE MN. This program should target much smaller acreages than the other government programs above.