



NFWF

Northern Great Plains 2018 Grant Slate

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FUNDING PARTNERS

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- BNSF Railways



Greater sage grouse

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and BNSF Railways announced a 2018 round of funding for Northern Great Plains Program projects. Sixteen new or continuing grassland conservation grants totaling \$2.81 million were awarded, generating \$9.66 million in match from the grantees, and providing a total conservation impact of more than \$12.47 million.

The vast grasslands of the Northern Great Plains support a unique assemblage of wildlife adapted to the wide open spaces. Thanks to generations of land stewardship by ranchers, tribes and public agencies, much of the Northern Great Plains remains as native grassland that is productive for people and wildlife. However, this unparalleled resource is facing threats including conversion to cropland, energy development, invasive species and a lack of capacity to manage the grasslands of this vast region. The Northern Great Plains Program works with willing private landowners and local partners to address these challenges by conserving and restoring native prairie and wildlife while also enhancing local ranching and tribal communities.

Conservation of Cornwell Ranch (MT)

Grantee: The Nature Conservancy	
Grant Amount:	\$150,000
Matching Funds:	\$150,000
Total Amount:	\$300,000
Acquire a conservation easement on approximately 4,000 acres of native grassland and	

ABOUT NFWF

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores our nation's fish and wildlife and their habitats. Created by Congress in 1984, NFWF directs public conservation dollars to the most pressing environmental needs and matches those investments with private funds. Learn more at www.nfwf.org

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Pronghorn

restore approximately 800 acres of native grassland in northern Valley County, Montana directly adjacent to the Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area. Project will protect and improve habitat for numerous species including imperiled grassland songbirds, greater sage-grouse and pronghorn.

Conservation of Weaver Cattle Company Ranch (MT)

Grantee: Montana Land Reliance
 Grant Amount: \$150,000
 Matching Funds: \$2,663,040
Total Amount: \$2,813,040

Acquire the Weaver Cattle Company conservation easement, located in Chouteau and Blaine counties in north-central Montana, a preferred habitat for sage grouse. Project will protect the 9,985 acre property and reseed 1,500 acres of cropland on the property into native grassland for sage grouse and other grassland species.

Conservation of Ringling Ranch (MT)

Grantee: Montana Land Reliance
 Grant Amount: \$300,000
 Matching Funds: \$2,809,197
Total Amount: \$3,109,197

Acquire the Ringling Ranch conservation easement, an Agricultural Lands Easement (ALE) through the Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) in Carter

County, southeastern Montana. Project will protect over 21,000 acres of rangeland, native grasslands and greater sage grouse habitat.

Restoring Connectivity on the Montana Hi-Land Grasslands

Grantee: Duck Unlimited
 Grant Amount: \$150,000
 Matching Funds: \$150,000
Total Amount: \$300,000

Protect privately-owned parcels in key grassland landscapes in north-central Montana through the USDA ALE Program. Project will identify and contact willing landowners to conserve properties left unprotected by wetland-specific programs, and provide non-federal cost-share on the easements and will cover a portion of the staff costs associated with the identification, development and establishment of the ALEs.

Rangeland Improvements on the Spring Creek Watershed (WY)

Grantee: Wyoming Game and Fish Department
 Grant Amount: \$150,000
 Matching Funds: \$565,000
Total Amount: \$715,000

Assist the Spring Creek Grazing Association with planning

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for range improvement structures and practices to improve habitat connectivity and improve range land habitat for a variety of sagebrush/prairie dependent wildlife species. Project will include projects designed to improve wildlife habitat and connectivity in the Spring Creek portion of the Thunder Basin National Grassland, including water development, fence conversion, cross fencing, cheatgrass spraying and rangeland aeration.

Addressing Eastern Red Cedar in the Nebraska Sandhills

Grantee: Nebraska Community Foundation FBO Rainwater Basin Joint Venture
 Grant Amount: \$300,000
 Matching Funds: \$736,250
Total Amount:.....\$1,036,250

Improve management on 27,625 acres of grasslands in Nebraska’s Sandhills. Project will include 17,250 acres of mechanical removal of invasive cedar, construction of grazing infrastructure to manage against re-infestation, and the hiring of a burn boss to provide training, plan and implement prescribed fire. Project will include a geospatial eastern red cedar inventory for the Sandhills documenting distribution and density across the landscape.

Using Decision-Support Tools to Strategically Support Grassland Bird Conservation (SD)

Grantee: Pheasants Forever
 Grant Amount: \$399,809
 Matching Funds: \$604,996
Total Amount:.....\$1,004,805

Deploy a new generation of decision-support tools for grassland bird conservation to strategically implement grazing management systems on 10,000 acres of priority grassland throughout western South Dakota. Project will identify grasslands with the highest risk of conversion, including tracts enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that are nearing contract expiration and encourage stewardship and enhancement.

Declining Grassland Birds Habitat Partnership (ND)

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited
 Grant Amount: \$214,966
 Matching Funds: \$242,000
Total Amount:..... \$456,966

Deliver working lands options that conserve grassland and wetland habitats through incentivized leases, native grass planting, grazing infrastructure enhancements, prescribed fire, and wetland restoration that target species habitat preferences. Project will provide flexible and voluntary programs that benefit grassland species while diversifying a producers operation, and better engaging the agricultural sector in implementing best management practices promoting sustainability.

Restoration and Management of Montana’s Milk River Grasslands

Grantee: Ranchers Stewardship Alliance
 Grant Amount: \$300,000
 Matching Funds: \$300,000
Total Amount:..... \$600,000

Utilize a diverse, community led partnership to implement restoration and enhanced management in the critically important landscape of Montana’s Milk River Grasslands. Project will focus on transitioning expiring CRP lands into working rangeland and improving management of non-native grass plantings, including the conversion of existing marginal cropland to perennial cover of native grasses and forbs through reseeding.

Support of Conservation Ranching Program (NE, SD)

Grantee: Audubon Dakota
 Grant Amount: \$138,928
 Matching Funds: \$242,770
Total Amount:..... \$441,698

Support the market-based CRP, which focuses on implementing bird-friendly land management practices through technical assistance and market based connection to landowners. Project will grow the program’s impact by expanding into the state of Nebraska and strengthen impact in western South Dakota by providing professional technical assistance to enrolled ranchers through an Audubon Range ecologist.

Evaluation of Sylvatic Plague Mitigation Effectiveness on Black-footed Ferret Populations (SD)

Grantee: Prairie Wildlife Research
 Grant Amount: \$124,895
 Matching Funds: \$447,500
Total Amount:..... \$572,395

Evaluate the effectiveness of two sylvatic plague mitigation tools on black-footed ferret survival and recruitment in three South Dakota populations. Project will build upon current black-footed ferret recovery efforts by monitoring treated ferret colonies to determine if the treatments are providing adequate protection, and the project team will provide direct vaccinations as needed.

Modification of Woven Wire Fences (MT)

Grantee: Bureau of Land Management - Miles City Field Office
 Grant Amount: \$50,000
 Matching Funds: \$50,000
Total Amount:..... \$100,000

Work to modify existing fences that do not meet specifications for wildlife, primarily pronghorn and mule deer. Cattle and sheep farming were historically the primary lifestyle in these communities and as a result, countless miles of fences crisscross the region. Woven



Prairie dog

wire fences were built to contain sheep, but these fences have created hazards and barriers for wildlife. When animals collide with or become entangled in fences they can be injured or killed. The objective is to replace at least 10.5 miles of woven wire fence in crucial pronghorn winter range and high use areas to wildlife friendly specifications to facilitate pronghorn and young wild ungulates movement across the landscape.

Tribal Youth Conservation Work Crew (SD)

Grantee: Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
 Grant Amount: \$36,787
 Matching Funds: \$36,787
Total Amount: \$73,574

Create a Tribal Youth Conservation Work Crew that will perform tasks on tribal and public lands that benefit focal wildlife species. Work Crew will work on the Lower Brule

Sioux Indian Reservation and Fort Pierre National Grassland in central South Dakota on improving pronghorn movement and reducing wildlife hazards, monitoring specific species of grassland birds, improving grassland bird habitat, and mitigating impacts of sylvatic plague.

Expanding the Spatial and Temporal Scale of the Northern Great Plains Plowprint Analytical Tool

Grantee: World Wildlife Fund
 Grant Amount: \$20,000
 Matching Funds: \$20,000
Total Amount: \$40,000

Update and expand geospatial data analysis, called the Plowprint, to evaluate landscape change metrics for the Northern Great Plains ecoregion. Project analysis will expand the previous versions by including northern Mexico, extending the analysis backward in time to capture historical change, and using the newest and best available data to track rates of agricultural conversion, monitor previously converted lands, identify risk factors for remaining intact habitat, and target conservation work.

Support for Nebraska Sandhills Wildlife Biologist

Grantee: Pheasants Forever
 Grant Amount: \$180,000
 Matching Funds: \$418,000
Total Amount: \$598,000

Build capacity by hiring a Farm Bill Biologist located in the Nebraska Sandhills to address the spread of invasive cedar and grassland conversion to cropland in an area critical to numerous species in decline. Project will improve 30,000 acres by working one-on-one with private landowners to restore intact grasslands by mechanically removing invasive tree species, promoting and demonstrating prescribed fire, writing prescribed grazing plans and reseeding converted areas back to native grasslands.

Support of MALT/NRCS Agricultural Land Easement Program (MT)

Grantee: Montana Association of Land Trusts
 Grant Amount: \$143,422
 Matching Funds: \$240,131
Total Amount: \$383,553

Support the MALT/NRCS Montana ALE Program Coordinator position. Project will provide critical additional NRCS staff capacity to process over 140,000 acres of Montana ALE projects that NRCS has obligated to fund. Program coordinator will work within the NRCS and land trusts to help them prepare and submit new easement applications, and track and assist these applications as they navigate into and through the ALE program process.