



Northern Great Plains Program

NFWF CONTACTS

Seth Gallagher

Program Director,
Grasslands and Mountain West
seth.gallagher@nfwf.org
303-222-6483

Dani Tinnin

Manager,
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
dani.tinnin@nfwf.org
202-677-3463

Margaret Card-Silache

Coordinator,
Regional Programs
margaret.card-silache@nfwf.org
202-973-7259

PARTNERS

- Bezos Earth Fund
- Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- ConocoPhillips
- Walmart Foundation
- Toyota Motor North America
- Capri Holdings
- Occidental

ABOUT NFWF

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) works with partners to foster sustainable and impactful conservation solutions so that people and nature thrive together. Chartered by Congress in 1984, NFWF has grown to become the nation's largest conservation foundation. Since its founding, NFWF has funded more than 23,900 projects that have generated a total conservation impact of \$12 billion.



Pronghorn

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)—in partnership with Bezos Earth Fund, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, ConocoPhillips, Walmart Foundation, Toyota Motor North America, Capri Holdings, and Occidental—announced the 2026 round of funding for Northern Great Plains projects. The 21 awards total more than \$16.8 million in grant funding, leveraged by \$48.5 million in grantee matching contributions for a total conservation impact of nearly \$65.4 million.

The following 21 projects collectively address all eight strategies for the Northern Great Plains Program:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Conserve important grasslands with conservation easements and other tools to maintain large blocks of habitat | 4. Implement grassland bird monitoring |
| 2. Restore grasslands for the benefit of grassland wildlife as well as ranchers and agricultural producers | 5. Implement sylvatic plague treatment |
| 3. Facilitate management of grasslands for the benefit of grassland wildlife as well as ranchers and agricultural producers | 6. Conserve pronghorn |
| | 7. Conserve sage-grouse |
| | 8. Build capacity of partners to address the other strategies. |

These 21 grants will contribute to the goals of the Northern Great Plains Business Plan by:

- Restoring more than 106,200 acres
- Improving management on more than 533,000 acres
- Improving 177 miles of fencing
- Protecting 236,300 acres via conservation easements and habitat agreements

(continued)

MONTANA**Conserving Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat through Perpetual Conservation Easements in Montana**

Grantee: The Montana Land Reliance

Grant Amount:.....\$1,950,000

Matching Funds:.....\$4,318,000

Total Project Amount:.....\$6,268,000

Protect 30,652 acres of greater sage-grouse prairie and more than 25 occupied leks through three perpetual conservation easements in central and eastern Montana. Project will maintain intact habitat blocks, prevent conversion and future subdivision, and support greater sage-grouse and other grassland-dependent species such as lark bunting.

Enhancing Buffalo Habitat and Wildlife-friendly Fencing on Blackfoot Lands (MT)

Grantee: Blackfoot Tribe of the Blackfoot Indian Reservation

Grant Amount:.....\$750,000

Matching Funds:.....\$350,000

Total Project Amount:.....\$1,100,000

Expand buffalo grazing capacity on the Blackfoot Reservation by installing approximately 50 miles of wildlife-friendly fencing to open thousands of additional acres for managed grazing and restoration. Project will make currently unusable pastures accessible for rotational grazing, expand the herd's available habitat and improve habitat conditions across Blackfoot lands.

Enhancing Sagebrush Habitat through Invasive Control, Riparian Restoration and Improved Fencing (MT)

Grantee: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Charles M. Russell NWR Complex

Grant Amount:.....\$500,000

Matching Funds:.....\$1,508,000

Total Project Amount:.....\$2,008,000

Eliminate invasive annual grasses with herbicide, improve 50 miles of fence and implement riparian area enhancement using beaver dam analogs. Project will restore more than 24,500 acres of core sagebrush habitat, improve landscape permeability and promote wildfire resiliency.

Expanding Habitat for Grassland Birds through Conservation Ranching (MT)

Grantee: Montana Audubon Society

Grant Amount:.....\$500,000

Matching Funds:.....\$970,000

Total Project Amount:.....\$1,470,000

Improve grassland bird habitat across the Northern Great Plains of Montana by implementing enhanced grazing management on 80,000 acres of private lands and restoring 10,400 acres on two ranches to benefit species such as chestnut-collared longspur, thick-billed longspur, Sprague's pipit, Baird's sparrow and greater sage-grouse. Project will increase habitat quality and resilience for priority grassland birds while supporting producer adoption of sustainable ranching practices across a high-value conservation landscape.

Increasing Capacity for Grassland Conservation in Montana

Grantee: The Montana Land Reliance

Grant Amount:.....\$250,000

Matching Funds:.....\$4,800,000

Total Project Amount:.....\$5,050,000

Support grassland and sage-grouse habitat conservation in central and eastern Montana by increasing organizational capacity and completing due-diligence activities needed to secure perpetual conservation easements protecting 34,318 acres and four sage-grouse leks. Project will reduce conversion risk and strengthen long-term habitat resilience in the Northern Great Plains.

NEBRASKA**Preserving Mesic Lowland Habitats of Eastern Sandhills for Grassland Birds and Waterbirds (NE)**

Grantee: International Crane Foundation

Grant Amount:.....\$476,700

Matching Funds:.....\$1,035,600

Total Project Amount:.....\$1,512,300

Preserve a 3,250-acre perpetual conservation easement on the Horseshoe Bar Ranch, remove more than 100 acres of invasive from riparian areas and drainages on three ranches, and conduct applied research on more than 30 sites. Project will sustain permanent habitat protection, improve grassland and wetland function, reduce woody encroachment and apply science-based guidance to inform future conservation priorities.

Protecting Nebraska's Grasslands in the Sandhills

Grantee: Nebraska Community Foundation FBO Rainwater Basin Joint Venture

Grant Amount:.....\$960,500

Matching Funds:.....\$1,672,500

Total Project Amount:.....\$2,633,000

Enhance and protect grassland in Nebraska's Sandhills by increasing partner capacity and implementing large-scale removal of eastern red cedar, wet-meadow restoration and grazing deferral. Project will improve long-term grassland resilience for priority species and reduce woody encroachment threats.

Strengthening the Sandhills with Grassland Resilience Strategies (NE)

Grantee: Sandhills Task Force

Grant Amount:.....\$1,185,400

Matching Funds:.....\$1,186,000

Total Project Amount:.....\$2,371,400

Work with private ranchers across Nebraska's Sandhills to enhance grassland resilience, wildlife habitat and ranch profitability by treating at least 55,000 acres through eastern red cedar removal, prescribed fire and improved grazing systems. Project will restore grassland health, improve water resources and benefit grassland-dependent birds.

(continued)



Black-footed ferret

NORTH DAKOTA

Improving Grassland Habitat and Wildlife Movement in Southwestern North Dakota

Grantee: North Dakota Natural Resources Trust
 Grant Amount:..... \$535,200
 Matching Funds:..... \$481,700
 Total Project Amount:.....\$1,016,900

Advance sustainable grazing and grassland enhancement on 15,000 acres by supporting landowners with technical assistance, 10-year agreements, cost-shared practices and maintain connected native prairie habitat. Project will improve pronghorn and big game movement through wildlife-friendly fencing, enhance rangeland health and plant diversity and strengthen long-term grassland stewardship through collaboration with partners across the region.

Restoring Grasslands by Reducing Woody Encroachment in the Badlands (ND)

Grantee: North Dakota Natural Resources Trust
 Grant Amount:.....\$1,068,400
 Matching Funds:.....\$1,072,700
 Total Project Amount:.....\$2,141,100

Treat approximately 3,200 acres of wood encroachment on U.S. Forest Service and private lands, improving management across 10,000 acres. Project will expand core grasslands, improve forage and bird habitat, reduce wildfire risk and increase producer adoption.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Building Capacity for Conservation Easements in the Northern Great Plains (SD)

Grantee: South Dakota Agricultural Land Trust
 Grant Amount:..... \$400,000
 Matching Funds:..... \$12,750,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$13,150,000

Secure perpetual protection of native grasslands with conservation easements thereby maintaining the connectivity of grasslands that provide habitat for grassland-obligate

wildlife populations and securing the sustainability of working agricultural lands, the landowners who steward them and the natural resources they provide. Project will help create an impactful easement program for South Dakota that will conserve grassland habitat and enhance grassland connectivity.

Improving Grassland Wildlife Habitat through Partner Collaboration (SD)

Grantee: South Dakota Department of Game Fish & Parks
 Grant Amount:.....\$1,047,700
 Matching Funds:.....\$1,091,900
 Total Project Amount:.....\$2,139,600

Enhance and restore grassland habitat for grassland-dependent birds and pronghorn in western South Dakota by using science-based tools to identify high-risk native prairie and working with ranchers to implement conservation practices that maintain intact grasslands. Project will improve habitat connectivity, reduce grassland conversion risk, and support long-term conservation through coordinated delivery and partner engagement supported by the South Dakota Grasslands Initiative.

WYOMING

Implementing Conifer Removal and Wildlife-friendly Fence Conversion through Local Partnership (WY)

Grantee: Wyoming Game and Fish Department
 Grant Amount:..... \$200,000
 Matching Funds:..... \$270,600
 Total Project Amount:..... \$470,600

Improve riparian habitat in the Deer Creek and Upper Powder River watersheds by installing low-tech, process-based stream restoration structures, stabilizing streambanks and reconnecting floodplains across 12.5 miles of degraded channels in partnership with the Trail Creek Grazing Association. Project will enhance wet meadow conditions, increase native vegetation and provide more resilient riparian systems that support wildlife and working-lands stewardship in this semi-arid landscape.

(continued)

MULTIPLE STATES**Advancing Ranching Conservation Grazing and Wildlife-friendly Fencing (MT, ND, SD, WY)**

Grantee: Montana Outdoor Legacy Foundation
 Grant Amount:..... \$649,400
 Matching Funds:..... \$2,100,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$2,749,400
 Implement ranch conservation and grazing management plans across working landscapes by improving prescribed grazing systems, enhancing wet meadows, restoring grasslands and controlling invasive vegetation. Project will expand wildlife movement and habitat connectivity through targeted fence removal throughout Northern Great Plains states, wildlife-friendly modifications and virtual fencing, while increasing regional capacity through shared deployment of a bobcat.

Advancing Sylvatic Plague Management for Black-footed Ferret Recovery (MT, SD)

Grantee: Prairie Wildlife Research
 Grant Amount:..... \$703,800
 Matching Funds:..... \$705,800
 Total Project Amount:..... \$1,409,600
 Protect 20,000 acres annually of prairie dog habitat in Montana and South Dakota through production and application of FipBits, an insecticide-based tool used to suppress fleas that transmit sylvatic plague and threaten black-footed ferrets and their prey. Project will reduce disease risk across active prairie dog colonies, strengthen conditions needed for black-footed ferret survival and enhance monitoring capacity.

Conserving Native Grasslands for Grassland Songbirds (SK)

Grantee: Saskatchewan Stock Growers Foundation
 Grant Amount:..... \$300,000
 Matching Funds:..... \$527,800
 Total Project Amount:..... \$827,800
 Conserve native grasslands in Saskatchewan to benefit priority birds through incentive-based conservation agreements. Project will work with producers and secure conservation easements on 1,800 acres of native grass, including 320 acres within Greater Sage Grouse Critical Habitat, and negotiate Habitat Management Agreements on 15,000 acres to prevent land conversion and improve management.

Growing Grassland Protection through Conservation Easements (NE, SD)

Grantee: The Nature Conservancy
 Grant Amount:..... \$2,275,000
 Matching Funds:..... \$10,357,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$12,632,000
 Support conservation easements to protect critical habitat for priority species by working with multigenerational ranch families in Nebraska and South Dakota. Project will conserve grassland habitat and connect fragmented landscapes.

Phase IV: Restoring Native Grassland and Expanding Regenerative Grazing (MT, NE, SD, WY)

Grantee: World Wildlife Fund
 Grant Amount:..... \$1,489,800
 Matching Funds:..... \$1,489,800
 Total Project Amount:..... \$2,979,600
 Expand the Ranch Systems and Viability Planning (RSVP) Network across the Northern Great Plains by improving grazing management, restoring native grasslands and riparian systems, and supporting ranch viability through technical assistance and infrastructure cost-share. Project will enhance management on at least 130,000 acres, enroll 15 ranches under 10-year retention agreements, restore 4,500 acres of marginal cropland and improve 7 miles of fencing for pronghorn movement.

Promoting Grassland Resiliency and Connectivity through Evidence-based Restoration (MT, ND, SD, WY)

Grantee: Montana Conservation Corps
 Grant Amount:..... \$647,400
 Matching Funds:..... \$827,400
 Total Project Amount:..... \$1,474,800
 Implement wet-meadow, mesic and upland grassland restoration across the Missouri-Milk River and Powder River-Thunder Basin grasslands by installing instream structures, restoring sage-grouse habitat, treating degraded grasslands and removing or modifying fencing to support pronghorn movement. Project will strengthen habitat connectivity, increase drought and flood resilience, and improve grassland and riparian habitat for sage-grouse, pronghorn and other grassland-dependent species.

Protecting and Restoring Prairie Dog Ecosystems to Support Black-footed Ferret Recovery (MT, SD, WY)

Grantee: Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
 Grant Amount:..... \$531,300
 Matching Funds:..... \$549,900
 Total Project Amount:..... \$1,081,200
 Protect and restore at least 13,300 acres of black-tailed prairie dog colony habitat that supports black-footed ferrets across the Missouri-Milk River, Dakota and Powder River-Thunder Basin areas. Project will reduce disease risk, stabilize prairie dog occupancy, restore colony habitat needed for ferret recovery, and strengthen tribal and partner capacity for monitoring, management and rapid plague response.

Updating the Plowprint Report to Inform Future Grassland Conservation Efforts (MT, ND, NE, SD, SK, WY)

Grantee: World Wildlife Fund
 Grant Amount:..... \$435,100
 Matching Funds:..... \$435,100
 Total Project Amount:..... \$870,200
 Generate annual updates of the Plowprint Report and Central Grasslands Assessment Map to track grassland quality and woody plant encroachment across the Great Plains and assess the composition of existing grasslands to inform water and wildlife benefits of intact grasslands. Project will conduct one study used to inform future grassland management.