



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

---

### Laws of Minnesota 2015 Final Report

#### General Information

**Date:** 11/05/2020

**Project Title:** Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Land Acquisition - Phase VI

**Funds Recommended:** \$3,430,000

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2015, First Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(d)

**Appropriation Language:** \$3,430,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with The Nature Conservancy in cooperation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire land in fee or permanent conservation easements within the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area in western Minnesota for addition to the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquisition of lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan and must be consistent with the priorities in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan.

#### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Ruth Thornton

**Title:** Deputy Director of Habitat Protection

**Organization:** The Nature Conservancy

**Address:** 1101 W. River Parkway Suite 200

**City:** Minneapolis, MN 55415

**Email:** ruth.thornton@tnc.org

**Office Number:** 612-331-0790

**Mobile Number:** 701-936-5058

**Fax Number:** 612-331-0770

**Website:** nature.org

#### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Pipestone, Clay, Pope, Chippewa, Murray, Lyon, Wilkin and Big Stone.

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Prairie

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Easement

- Protect in Fee

#### **Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Prairie

## **Narrative**

### **Summary of Accomplishments**

This appropriation allowed the permanent protection of 1,283 acres in western Minnesota, including 583 acres of remnant prairie, 500 acres of other grasslands, 88 acres of wetlands, and more than 8,150' of streamfront. For this phase we had originally planned to protect 1,090 acres, with at least 545 acres of native prairie. We exceeded both goals, protecting 118% of the total acre goal and 107% of the native prairie acre goal. All parcels that were purchased with this funding by TNC have been transferred to the USFWS as part of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge.

### **Process & Methods**

The Council's 25-Year Framework identifies protecting Minnesota's remaining native prairies as a critical priority. The Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan (Prairie Plan) describes the importance of preserving the cores/corridors/complexes in areas with the greatest opportunities for long-term conservation of these prairies. The Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge (NTP NWR) Land Acquisition program shares these goals. This program is a cooperative, multi-year effort of The Nature Conservancy and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to preserve and protect our remaining prairies and the surrounding habitat that buffers them. With Outdoor Heritage Fund support, this partnership is working together to advance these goals.

This program also includes a relatively small restoration/enhancement component of the acres acquired. While the prioritization criteria favor parcels that are in good condition, because of the nature of parcel ownership some properties included small areas of converted or degraded lands needing grassland or wetland restoration/enhancement. This work is completed only on parcels acquired with this funding, as needed to get these properties into a sustainable condition for inclusion into the NTP NWR and future management. These acres are not reported as a separate outcome in the Output Tables in order to avoid any possible double-counting.

### **How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?**

This phase included the purchase of both fee title properties and permanent habitat easements. The original target was the protection of 1,090 acres, including 545 acres protected in fee title, and 545 acres in conservation easements. All of these acreage goals were exceeded (1,283 total acres, or 118% of the goal; over 685 fee title acres, or 126% of the goal; and over 597 easement acres, or 110% of the goal).

This program's top criterion for selecting projects is the presence of remnant native prairie. As noted above, nearly 583 acres of remnant native prairie were permanently protected. Another important goal is protecting lands in existing complexes of habitat and protected lands – over 1,120 acres (88% of overall acres) were in areas identified as a Prairie Core or Corridor in the MN Prairie Plan. We also target lands with high-quality habitat and the rare species this habitat supports. Data from the Minnesota Biological Survey identified 556 of the protected acres as having significant biodiversity, with 102 of these acres ranked high biodiversity. These lands support a wide range of prairie species of concern and the vegetative communities that support them, including wet, mesic, and dry hill prairies, wet seepage prairies, calcareous fens, and migratory stopover habitats for water birds. Species benefited by the protected parcels include Blanding's turtles, the creek heelsplitter mussel, nesting upland

sandpipers, small white lady's slipper, and many others. Another highlight in this phase was the protection of multiple lengths of stream that are designated critical habitat for the federally endangered Topeka shiner.

Restoration/enhancement activity with this round of funding included grassland site preparation/seeding or interseeding/mowing on five parcels (Pope #10, Pope #13, Kandiyohi #5, Big Stone #7, Kandiyohi #4), tree and/or dense vegetation removal on seven parcels (Pope #10, Pope #13, Kandiyohi #5, Clay #6, Murray #6, Big Stone #6, Chippewa #1), an oxbow restoration to enhance Topeka shiner habitat on one parcel (Murray #6), homesite demolition on one parcel (Kandiyohi #5), and invasives control on two parcels (Pope #10, Pope #13).

### **How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.**

This program's overall priorities are guided by the listed conservation plans. Individual properties are reviewed by USFWS and TNC biologists using the parcel selection criteria listed above. The analyses include: existence of native prairie, location in a prairie core or corridor, presence of nearby protected lands, and the presence of other rare habitats and species.

### **Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition**

This program is a cooperative effort of The Nature Conservancy and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. TNC and USFWS staff cooperate on parcel selection, working with landowners, completing due diligence requirements, and wrapping up any needed restoration/enhancement. Other agencies and NGOs are involved in this process through Landscape Technical Teams. These groups were set up to coordinate action in the priority areas identified in the Prairie Plan.

Based on feedback from local governments, TNC and USFWS instituted a new process in June, 2016 to send written notification to county governments prior to acquisition, and all of the properties in this round were acquired after this was implemented. No concerns on these projects were reported by the counties.

### **Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program**

There were no exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects encountered for this program.

### **What other funds contributed to this program?**

- Other : Federal funds, private funds, and landowner donation provided as leverage.

### **How were the funds used to advance the program?**

A total of \$456,300 was provided in leverage, 115% of the originally anticipated amount. The USFWS provided \$142,000 of in-kind staff support from USFWS field staff. \$200,000 in acquisitions (\$100,000 in fee title and \$100,000 in conservation easements) was provided from a North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant. Additionally, a landowner donated a portion of the purchase price, \$13,300, for the acquisition of parcel Clay #7, and TNC provided \$101,000 of private funds that cover the unrecovered portion of Direct Support Services.

### **What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?**

All parcels purchased under this funding have been transferred to the USFWS as inclusion in the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. The USFWS will continue to manage these properties, and will fund the

long-term restoration, management, and wildlife/habitat/easement monitoring activities through annual USFWS operations funding.

## Budget

### Totals

Item	Request	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$187,500	\$206,200	\$142,000	\$142,000	USFWS	\$329,500	\$348,200
Contracts	\$220,000	\$244,100	-	-	-	\$220,000	\$244,100
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,713,700	\$1,528,100	\$100,000	\$113,300	USFWS, TNC	\$1,813,700	\$1,641,400
Easement Acquisition	\$1,142,500	\$1,256,100	\$100,000	\$100,000	USFWS	\$1,242,500	\$1,356,100
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$9,000	\$5,500	-	-	-	\$9,000	\$5,500
Professional Services	\$106,300	\$114,800	-	-	-	\$106,300	\$114,800
Direct Support Services	\$40,000	\$44,000	\$56,000	\$101,000	TNC	\$96,000	\$145,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$10,000	\$800	-	-	-	\$10,000	\$800
Supplies/Materials	\$1,000	\$28,600	-	-	-	\$1,000	\$28,600
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$3,430,000</b>	<b>\$3,428,200</b>	<b>\$398,000</b>	<b>\$456,300</b>	-	<b>\$3,828,000</b>	<b>\$3,884,500</b>

### Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Protection Specialist/Technician	1.0	2.0	\$140,300	-	-	\$140,300
Field Steward/Land Steward	0.02	2.0	-	-	-	-
Science Staff	0.01	2.0	\$200	-	-	\$200
Grants Administration	0.08	2.0	\$13,000	-	-	\$13,000
Program Coordination	0.1	2.0	\$52,700	-	-	\$52,700
USFWS In-Kind/Volunteer	0.0	2.0	-	\$142,000	USFWS	\$142,000

### Direct Support Services

**How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?**

DSS is based on The Nature Conservancy's Federally Negotiated rate as approved by the US Dept. of Interior.

**Explain any budget challenges or successes:**

We permanently protected 1,283 acres, 118% of the stated goal of the program, and 583 acres of remnant native prairie, 107% of the native prairie acres goal, while remaining below budget by approximately \$1,800. We also provided 115% of the originally anticipated leverage.

**Total Revenue: \$0**

**Revenue Spent: \$0**

**Revenue Balance: \$0**

**Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:**

## Output Tables

### Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	545	686	0	0	0	0	545	686
Protect in Easement	0	0	545	597	0	0	0	0	545	597
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>1,283</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>1,283</b>

### How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie? (Table 1b)

Type	Native Prairie (AP)	Native Prairie (Final)
Restore	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	180	163
Protect in Easement	365	420
Enhance	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>583</b>

### Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	\$2,058,000	\$1,801,100	-	-	-	-	\$2,058,000	\$1,801,100
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$1,372,000	\$1,627,100	-	-	-	-	\$1,372,000	\$1,627,100
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,430,000</b>	<b>\$3,428,200</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,430,000</b>	<b>\$3,428,200</b>

### Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	545	686	0	0	545	686
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	545	597	0	0	545	597
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>1,283</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>1,283</b>

### Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,058,000	\$1,801,100	-	-	\$2,058,000	\$1,801,100
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,372,000	\$1,627,100	-	-	\$1,372,000	\$1,627,100
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,430,000</b>	<b>\$3,428,200</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,430,000</b>	<b>\$3,428,200</b>

### Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	\$3,776	\$2,625	-	-	-	-

Protect in Easement	-	-	\$2,517	\$2,725	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

### Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$3,776	\$2,625	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,517	\$2,725	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

### Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

14,133 feet

### Outcomes

#### Programs in prairie region:

- Remnant native prairies are part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and large and small wetlands ~ *USFWS, TNC biologists, and GIS analysis measured the following outcomes from this funding:*  
*Total acres protected: 1,283 acres*  
*Native remnant prairie acres protected: 583 acres*  
*Other native habitat protected: 87 acres of wetlands, 500 acres of non-native prairie grasslands, 41 forested acres, and 8,168 feet of streamfront.*  
*Acres located in MN Prairie Plan areas (Core or Corridor): 1,123 acres (88% of total acres).*  
*Acres identified by the MN Biological Survey as moderate or higher biodiversity significance: 556 acres*

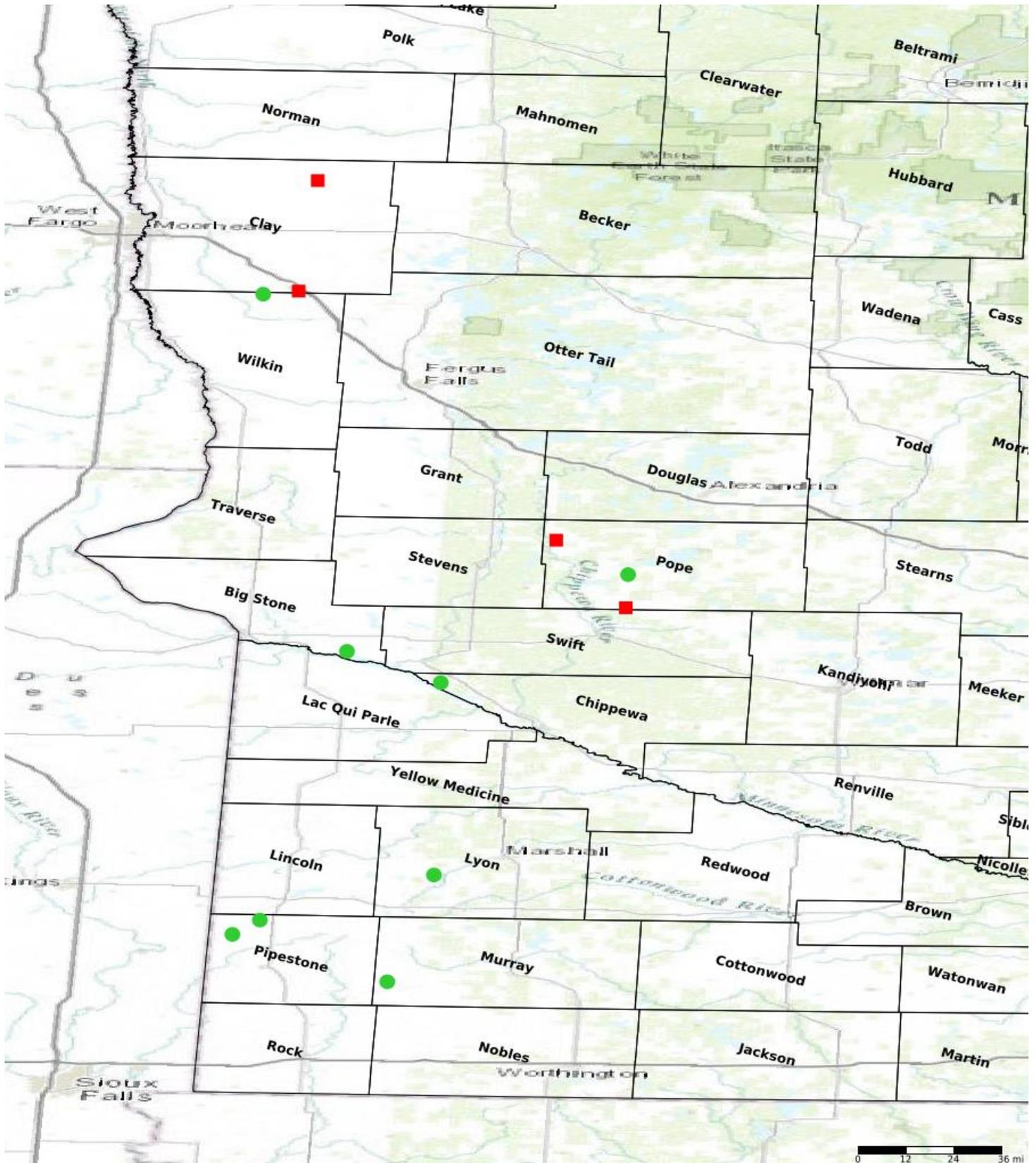
## Parcels

### Sign-up Criteria?

No

### Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Big Stone #6	Big Stone	12044205	138	\$317,000	No
Chippewa #1	Chippewa	11942218	78	\$145,800	No
Clay #6	Clay	14245234	304	\$547,100	No
Clay #7	Clay	13745232	156	\$305,000	No
Lyon #5	Lyon	11042206	45	\$155,500	No
Murray #6	Murray	10643232	80	\$229,000	No
Pipestone #5	Pipestone	10846232	51	\$85,400	No
Pipestone #4	Pipestone	10846211	76	\$150,300	No
Pope #8	Pope	12439215	103	\$113,500	No
Pope #13	Pope	12640232	160	\$480,500	No
Pope #10	Pope	12339234	65	\$209,500	No
Wilkin #1	Wilkin	13646204	27	\$59,800	No



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ⊕ Other

**Parcel Map**  
**Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge**  
**Land Acquisition - Phase VI**  
**(Data Generated From Parcel List)**