

PRAIRIE BUSH CLOVER RECOVERY LAND ACQUISITION PROPOSAL – NARRATIVE

The States of Iowa and Wisconsin are submitting a proposal for a Recovery Land Acquisition Grant for \$792,225 to help acquire 265 acres that would contribute to the recovery of prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*). Prairie bush clover occurs in remnants of native tallgrass prairie in four midwestern states. Destruction of prairie approaches or exceeds 99% in all states within the species' range and acquisition and expansion of prairie bush clover sites will have significant benefits for protection of this imperiled ecosystem. Prairie bush clover was listed as a threatened species in 1987 and has a recovery priority number of 8.

The primary objective of the Prairie Bush Clover Recovery Plan is to acquire and appropriately manage at least 20 viable populations within the species' "core area" and at least 15 viable populations outside of the core area (peripheral populations). While there are 19 protected populations each in the core area and peripheral areas, several of the latter are not viable. Counts of flowering plants at nine of the protected peripheral sites have never exceeded 31 individuals and some recent surveys at several of these sites have failed to locate a single flowering plant. The marginal viability of several protected populations indicates that additional acquisitions are necessary to meet the recovery objective.

The Iowa project would protect an additional peripheral population and the Wisconsin project would buffer the second largest peripheral population across the range from the effects of development, gravel mining, and agriculture.

IOWA

NEED

This project will contribute to the recovery of prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostchya*), a federally threatened species, by protecting a peripheral population through acquisition of a 265-acre parcel in Butler County. Protection of this site, Washington Prairie, is a Priority 2 Task in the Prairie Bush Clover Recovery Plan (Task No. 11101).

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) purchased a 64-acre tract adjacent to a prairie bush clover population on state land. This tract in Clay County buffers a known population and may also support prairie bush clover as it was previously pasture and not cultivated. This acquisition is covered under Task Number 111 of the Recovery Plan.

OBJECTIVES

1. Acquire the 165-acre Washington Prairie tract in Butler County, Iowa. Acquisition will facilitate management for the benefit of prairie bush clover on this site by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or cooperators. A willing seller has been identified and preliminary discussions have been held to determine the approximate costs of protection. This project will promote the completion of negotiations and acquisition of the property. The end point of the project will be permanent protection of the site through purchase and perpetual management.
2. The Iowa DNR purchased two properties, one in Dickinson County (80 acres) and the other in Clay County (64 acres), Iowa under a previous recovery acquisition project, which was submitted as a joint project with Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Funding for these two acquisitions was based on an estimate of \$180,000 (Project E-5-1, Iowa). The appraised value for the two properties, however, was \$221,000. The Iowa DNR requests funding for the difference between the original grant amount and the appraised value -- \$41,000.

EXPECTED RESULTS OR BENEFITS

The expected benefit of this project is the protection and appropriate management of land inhabited by prairie bush clover. The Washington Prairie project will advance the objectives of the recovery plan by protecting and managing a site presently in private ownership and threatened by over-grazing and will ensure that an additional population outside the core area is placed under permanent protection and management. The Washington Prairie site is a remnant of native dry prairie on a west-facing slope within a 125-acre pasture. About 50% of the pasture on the steeper slopes is remnant prairie while the area along the creek is dominated by cool season species.

Thirty-seven prairie bush clover plants were observed in 1979 and twelve in 1987 on the remnant prairie. No counts have been made since 1987 because the site has been heavily grazed. It is expected that with release from over-grazing and with conservation management the bush-clover population will significantly increase. On one site in Iowa, for example, prairie bush clover abundance increased ten-fold after the cessation of intense grazing and introduction of appropriate management. Therefore, protection of this site could have a significant impact on the conservation status of prairie bush clover.

The project will also provide habitat for other prairie and grassland species, such as the Regal Fritillary (*Speyeria idalia*, G3) and Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*, G4) that are found on or adjacent to the site.

APPROACH

Iowa has identified private land with a known population of prairie bush clover that will contribute to recovery of the species. The Iowa DNR will contact the landowner to make an offer and arrange for property acquisition according to state land acquisition procedures. Landowner contact has been made prior to submission of this project statement. The Iowa DNR will comply with the federal standards for land acquisition. The landowner has indicated willingness to sell the subject parcel if funding is received through this application. Iowa DNR has successfully acquired lands under the Recovery Land Acquisition program.

Iowa's cost share (10%) will be from state Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) funds, State Habitat Stamp funds, or private donations.

Upon approval of funding, the Iowa DNR will contact the landowner to negotiate acquisition. It is anticipated that approximately 16 months will be required for acquisition. Upon acquisition management responsibilities will be retained by the Iowa DNR.

The Iowa DNR requests cost share for pre-agreement costs, including costs for appraisals and surveys.

Any land acquired by the Iowa DNR under this project will be listed on our Land Inventory, which lists cost of the property, size, and the funding sources. Also it will be noted on the deed that there is a federal interest in the acquired property.

If the identified tracts could not be acquired additional parcels would be acquired that would meet the guidelines of the grant.

LOCATION

The 165 acre Washington Prairie is located in Butler County, Iowa with the prairie bush clover population located on the dry west facing slope of the native prairie portion of the property. About 125 acres of the 165 acre property is pasture or remnant prairie. The remainder of the property is in row-crop agriculture. The crop ground is included in the acquisition boundary to provide buffer and eliminate the need for an irregular boundary.

ESTIMATED COSTS – IOWA ACQUISITIONS

1. Washington Prairie – Butler County (New Project)

Estimated acquisition cost	\$239,250.00
Federal Share (90%)	\$215,325.00
State Share (10%)	\$ 23,925.00

2. Salton and TNC Tracts (increase for project approved under grant agreement E-5-1 Iowa)¹

Total increase in costs	\$ 41,000.00
Federal Share (90%)	\$ 36,900.00
Matching Share	\$ 4,100.00

Total Project Cost	\$280,250.00
Federal Share (90%)	\$252,225.00
Matching Share (10%)	\$ 28,025.00

¹ The Iowa DNR applied for ES funds for these tracts in a prior year and was awarded funds. The estimated costs at the time were \$180,000 and a grant agreement was approved (E-5-1) for that amount. Land negotiations have occurred since approval of the GA and the current costs incurred to purchase these tracts was \$221,000. The Iowa DNR is seeking additional funds to cover these increased costs. If funds are approved, the current grant agreement will be amended to add the additional funds.

WISCONSIN

NEED

This project will contribute to the recovery of prairie bush clover by helping to protect and expand the largest population in Wisconsin. This population is also the largest peripheral population in the prairie bush clover range. Funds are needed to assist in acquisition of a 100-acre parcel that contains 10 acres of remnant prairie. Protection of this site, Westport Drumlin Prairie, part of the Empire Prairie State Natural Area, is a Priority 2 Task in the Prairie Bush Clover Recovery Plan.

OBJECTIVES

The objective is to acquire a 100-acre tract in Dane County, Wisconsin that contains 10 acres of prairie remnant and is adjacent to the largest population of prairie bush clover in Wisconsin.

EXPECTED RESULTS OR BENEFITS

The expected benefit of this project is the permanent protection and appropriate management of land adjacent to the second largest prairie bush clover population in the peripheral range. The Westport Drumlin Prairie project will advance the objectives of the recovery plan by allowing for the expansion of the prairie bush clover population. The property is within seven miles of downtown Madison and development and mining pressure is high. There is a gravel pit on adjacent land and if the site is not acquired it will be sold for development or gravel extraction.

Acquisition of the site will provide buffer for the existing population as well as providing for additional bush clover habitat because the proposed acquisition contains 10 acres of remnant prairie. While prairie bush clover has not been found on the private land, the quality of the remnant prairie is similar to Westport Drumlin Prairie. The Prairie Enthusiasts, a private organization committed to the protection and management of native prairie and savanna, have been managing (prescribed burning and removing woody and invasive species) the private prairie remnants for over 12 years. The land to be acquired is within 100 feet on two sides of the existing prairie bush clover population. About 90 acres of the property is in row-crop agriculture. The cropland is included in the acquisition boundary to provide buffer and to provide the opportunity to reconstruct prairie to provide additional habitat for prairie bush clover. Prairie bush clover establishes readily by seed. Therefore, it is likely that it will become established in the areas restored to prairie. If acquired, the property will be part of the Empire Prairie State Natural Area and will be managed for the benefit of prairie bush clover by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Westport Drumlin Prairie is situated on a northeast to southwest-oriented glacially sculpted ridge. The existing 15 acres of state land is very diverse and more than 100 native plant species have been recorded. The dominant grasses are big and little bluestem, Indian grass, side-oats grama, needle grass, and prairie dropseed. Forbs present include pasque flower, cream wild indigo, rough blazing star, yellow coneflower, shooting star, bird's-foot violet, compass plant, and rosinweed. Prairie false dandelion (*Nothocalais cuspidate*) (Special Concern S2G5), grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) (Special Concern G5S3B) and the red-tailed leafhopper (*Aflexia rubranura* G1G2), a state-endangered insect that feeds exclusively on prairie dropseed, are also present. There is also a small area of oak opening, with open-grown bur oaks.

The 10 acres of prairie remnants on the property to be acquired range from dry-mesic to mesic and are very diverse. Dominant forbs include rattlesnake master, heart-leaved golden alexander, white prairie clover and prairie phlox. Hill's thistle (*Cirsium hillii*) (State threatened G3S3) and the red-tailed leafhopper is found on the land to be acquired. The acquisition also has existing and great potential for grassland bird habitat that would benefit dickcissels, eastern and western meadowlarks, bobolinks, and Henslow's sparrows.

Prairie bush clover has been counted at Westport Drumlin Prairie four times since 1993. The population ranged from 814 to 2,019 with an average of 1,460 plants.

APPROACH

A willing seller for the 100 acres contacted the Department. An appraisal has been completed and an offer has been made. The seller is deciding if he should sell to the Department. The seller is interested in seeing the property "preserved and restored" but is also looking at potential residential development or gravel mining. At the same time the Department is trying to secure funding to pay for the parcel.

The Wisconsin DNR will comply with the federal standards for land acquisition. The Wisconsin DNR has successfully acquired lands under the Recovery Land Acquisition program.

Wisconsin's cost share (10%) will be from Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, a State of Wisconsin ten-year bonding program that provides land acquisition funds for the DNR, local units of government, and conservation organizations.

Upon approval of funding and signing an offer to purchase, the Wisconsin DNR will secure the Department and Governor's approval. Management responsibilities will be retained by the Wisconsin DNR with assistance from The Prairie Enthusiasts.

The Wisconsin DNR requests cost share for only the land costs and not associated costs. The property will be attached to the Empire Prairie State Natural Area. It will be noted on the deed that there is a federal interest in the acquired property.

If the identified tract could not be acquired additional parcels would be acquired that would meet the guidelines of the grant.

LOCATION

The Westport Drumlin Prairie is located in Dane County, Wisconsin (T8N, R9E, Section 11), about seven miles north of the downtown Madison.

ESTIMATED COSTS – WISCONSIN ACQUISITION

Westport Prairie – Dane County

Estimated acquisition cost	\$600,000
Federal Share (90%)	\$540,000
State Share (10%)	\$ 60,000