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Illinois DNR

April 14, 2008

SWG Grant Application System

Applicant(Grantee if awarded)	
Prefix	Mr.
First Name	Brian
Last Name	Russart
Organization	Rockford Blacktop Construction Company
Address1	5290 Nimtz Road
Address2	Attn: Butch Rafferty
City	Loves Park
State	IL
Zip Code	61111
Telephone	(815) 871-6595
Fax	() -
Email	roundrivercc at hotmail.com

PROJECT TITLE - Large scale restoration along the Pecatonica River in northern Illinois.

Project Description

This is a restoration of 129 acres in the 100yr floodplain of the Pecatonica River consisting of riparian forest, savanna, and prairie. It is phase 2&3 of a 10 phase 600 acre restoration. The project partners are the USFWS, ILDNR, Winnebago County Chapter of Pheasants Forever, and Rockford Blacktop Construction Company. This project will assist in implementing the campaigns and objectives of the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and provide habitat for species listed in the plan

Type of Project

Implementation

(Match Rates Implementation: 50% Federal : 50% Non-Federal | 75% Federal : 25% Non-Federal)

Dollars Requested	Total Federal	Total Non-Federal	Total Cost of Project
1st Year Funding	68539	68539	137078
2nd Year Funding	17265	17265	34530
3rd Year Funding	0	0	0
Totals:	85804	85804	171608

Need:

This project allows for the restoration and enhancement of near stream habitat, 1 mile of frontage along the Pecatonica River and entirely within its 100 yr floodplain, as well as habitat for species listed

in the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan such as Bald Eagles which have nested and fledged young on this site for the past 5 years. The site is unique in that it falls within the Winnebago County Greenways Plan Area listed as a priority acquisition, USFWS NW IL Focus Area, the IL DNRs Sugar-Pecatonica River Conservation Opportunity Area, The Nature Conservancy's Portfolio Area, and is adjacent to the 750 acre Torstenson/Ducks Unlimited easement. In phases 2 & 3 the tree plantings, 43 acres, provide the ability to fill in a significant gap in the Pecatonica River corridor. Riparian forests are already located on adjoining properties directly to the east, 195 acres, and to the south, 42 acres existing and 45 acres currently being reforested in an IL DNR Project. The replanted forest will be important as a resting and feeding area for neo-tropical migrants in the spring and fall. This project is not eligible for US DAs CRP or WRP program. Areas adjacent to the grant area have been already enrolled in the USFWS's Partners for Wildlife Program, 15 yr contracts. Although an excellent program, funding for the Partners Program is capped each year per property owner and greatly slows down the rate at which the property can be fully restored. The USFWS will assist in restoring 40 acres of mesic prairie and 20 acres of riparian forest in 2008 on this property.

Objectives:

The objectives of the restoration are the same as the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan goals for the Rock River Hill Country Natural Division: 1. Increase forested acres, in particular protect, restore, and connect riparian forests along the Pecatonica River. 43 acres to be planted to bottomland hardwoods. 2. Increase savanna and open woodland acres, through the restoration of degraded areas by restoring natural processes such as fire, removal of invasive species, and planting of native plant communities. 27 acres to be restored to savanna. The large overstory oaks already exist through most of this area, so restoration would focus on invasive species removal, native species establishment, and fire implementation. 3. Increased native grassland acres through conversion of agricultural land, row crops and pasture to native, large prairie restorations managed with fire and soil disturbance. 59 acres of mesic prairie with smaller areas of dry and wet prairie embedded with the mesic areas. Native species planted will be based on soil types present. 4. Improve water quality through the restoration of near stream habitat along the Pecatonica River. The entire restoration area lies within the 100 yr floodplain on the Pecatonica River and is connected to the river system through a number of large wetlands-oxbows already on the property. The majority of the site is currently row-crops and pasture. 5. Provide restored, enhanced, and properly managed habitat for species listed in the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan such as: bald eagle, red shouldered hawk, cerulean warbler, hooded merganser, blue spotted salamander, river otter, Indiana bat, American badger, sandhill crane, brown creeper, rusty blackbird, great blue heron, rookery directly to the southwest across the river, red-headed woodpecker, northern flicker, yellow-billed cuckoo, henslow sparrow, bobolink, northern harrier, upland sandpiper, short-eared owl, logger-head shrike, bobwhite quail and neo-tropical migrants during spring and fall migration.

Approach:

The planted trees will be 3 gallon stock of native species adapted to the site and planted at a rate of 100 per acre. The 3 gallon stock was chosen due to potential flooding, quicker canopy closure to shade re-invasion of reed canary grass, and its ability to survive deer damage. Trees will be planted in the fall, October/ November, after they have gone dormant to reduce mortality. Tree mats and protectors will be installed on and around all trees to reduce wildlife damage. The IL DNR District Wildlife Biologist will be developing a deer management plan for the property to manage deer numbers while the trees are establishing. An upland plateau bisects the larger project area. This area is dominated by an overstory of scattered swamp white oak, bur oak, pin oak, and the occasional shagbark hickory. This area lends itself to the creation of an oak savanna plant community. Currently these areas are in pasture, cool season non-native grass, and row-crops. Herbicide and fire will be used to remove non-native species and prepare the site for planting with a no-till drill. The prairie planting area will be 59 acres and consist of a mesic prairie community with smaller areas of wet & dry prairie communities. All prairie seed will be local genotype. Individual dry and wet soils within this planting area will be mapped out so the best adapted native plants will be planted in the proper growing conditions. All herbicide application, controlled burns, and prairie seeding will be done by private contractor and/or Pheasants Forever volunteers. Tree plantings will be done by Rockford Blacktop employees. The USFWS Private Lands Biologist will be providing technical assistance. The entire restoration plan has been reviewed and approved by Doug Dufford, IL DNR District Wildlife Biologist Kraig McPeck, USFWS Private Lands Biologist for NW Illinois. Project location: Winnebago

County, T27N R10E Sec 1, 4th Meridian. Quarterly Tasks: Jan 1-Mar 31,2009: Order seed,redtop and oats for tree planting areas and prairie seed Apr 1 - Jun 30, 2009: Tree planting site prep:Burn off residue,herbicide,let the site sit for 2 weeks,disc to encourage dormant reed canary nodes to germinate,herbicide again after green up,control weeds through mowing during the early growing season,plant cool season grass in fall planting eason, August.Plant prairie seed, May, and conduct first mowing on all planted areas to control broadleaf weeds Jul 1 - Sep 30,2009: Second mowing all planting areas and herbicide savanna area in preparation for 2010 Oct 1 - Dec 31, 2009: Plant trees and install tree protectors.Burn the savanna area in preparation for 2010 Jan 1 - Mar 31,2010: Order seed for savanna area Apr 1-Jun 30, 2010: Herbicide savannaarea after green-up. Plant seed in savanna areas and conduct first mowing. Install tree mats Jul 1- Sep 30,2010: Second mowing of savanna and tree planting to control broadleaf weeds.

Relationship To Plan:

This project ties into the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan through the Streams Campaign-Action item 3a,Forests Campaign-Action items 1-a.1, 2a, 2b,Farmland & Prairie Campaign-Action items 1a, 1b, 2a,2b, 2e, Invasive Species Campaign-Action item 4, Land Stewardship Campaign-Action item 1b.

Anticipated Outcomes and Benefits:

By completing this project we will have restored near stream habitat in the land and water transition area within the 100-yr flood plain of the Pecatonica River and adjacent agricultural areas improving water quality and critical wildlife habitat. The restoration will fill in a significant gap in the wildlife corridor along the Pecatonica River which will provide ecological connectivity between forests, savanna, and prairie habitats. Completion of this project will allow for the creation of large treeless grasslands transitioning into savanna, and then into riparian forest. Native plant communities would be managed through natural processes, fire, to control invasive species and provide a diversity of high quality habitat types for species in greatest need of conservation.It will provide a model of habitat restoration and voluntary stewardship on private land and provide improved habitat for the nesting bald eagles. Finally, this project helps achieve the goals of the Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan set forth in the Rock River Hill Country Natural Division section of the plan.

Signature of Principal Investigator:

Date:

Signature of department or unit head (if required):

Date:



[Print Application](#) | [Return to Main Menu](#)