

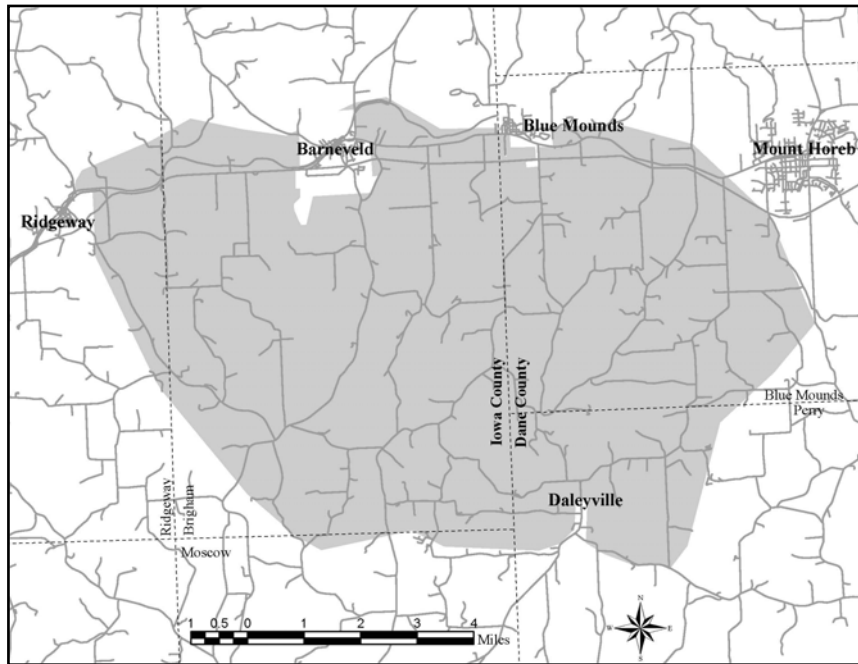
LANDOWNER'S TOOL BOX



**A reference for landowners who want to conserve natural
resources in southwest Wisconsin**

Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

Working with landowners to protect a grassland legacy



The Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area is one of the Midwest's few remaining landscapes that sustain a wide variety of native prairie species. It lies at the headwaters of the Sugar and Pecatonica Rivers in southeastern Iowa and southwestern Dane counties. It contains a high concentration of original tallgrass prairie sod, one of the most endangered natural communities on earth. Grassland bird populations are declining worldwide, but the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA) is one of their few remaining strongholds in the Midwest.

When settlers first traveled along the Military Ridge, the views were filled with tallgrass prairie and oak savanna. Prairie chickens and meadowlarks were abundant, and trees were sparse. Farmers and other private landowners have conserved the special qualities of this landscape for generations. More recently, a large coalition of scientists, sportsmen and land managers has recognized the significance of this special corner of the world and has pledged to help landowners protect and restore these outstanding natural features. These partners share the goals of protecting MRPHA's open, rural quality and fostering the health of its streams, native prairies, savannas and grassland bird populations. They want to work with private landowners to achieve these goals. The booklet in your hands provides key information to help landowners take advantage of their help.

In addition to this booklet, people who own land in the MRPHA can get help from the Project Coordinator, Katie Abbott. She can explain many of the resources in this book, help landowners recognize the natural features on their land, and guide people through applications for some programs. Contact Katie at (608) 935-2791 ext. 134 or katie.abbott@rcdnet.net.

Organizations	Conservation Tools							
	Page	Permanent Land Conservation	Term Land Conservation	Financial Assistance	Management Assistance	Technical Assistance	Stewardship Recognition	Reference and Recreation Sites
Blue Mounds Area Project	5					X	X	
County Land Conservation Depts.	5					X		
Department of Natural Resources	6	X	X	X		X	X	X
Driftless Area Land Conservancy	7	X	X			X		
Natural Resources Conservation Service	7	X	X	X		X		
The Nature Conservancy	8	X	X					X
Pheasants Forever	9			X	X	X		
Private Contractors	9				X	X		
Resource Conservation & Development Councils	9					X	X	
The Prairie Enthusiasts	10	X	X		X	X		X
Trout Unlimited	10			X	X	X		
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	11			X	X	X		
University of Wisconsin Extension	12					X		

CONSERVATION TOOL DESCRIPTIONS

These descriptions cover a broad range of “tools” that are available to most landowners. Each organization’s mission varies. Check the description in the text to see what kind of lands may qualify.

Permanent Land Conservation

Selling or donating land or perpetual rights in land such as conservation easements or development rights. These options could have substantial tax advantages if a landowner chooses to donate land or sell for less than full value.

Term Land Conservation

Easements lasting a specific period of time, leasing development rights, management agreements and service contracts.

Financial Assistance

Annual payments or one-time cost-sharing for specific land management practices, grant programs, tax relief programs, and other compensation programs.

Management Assistance

Labor and equipment to remove brush and weeds, sow seeds, or conduct prescribed burns.

Technical Assistance

Inventory and assessment, management planning, advice and recommendations, design specifications, and research.

Stewardship Recognition Programs

Awards, celebrations, and non-binding, recorded acknowledgement of voluntary private stewardship of natural lands, also known as registry programs.

Reference and Recreation Sites

Properties that are open to the public and may contain examples of high-quality ecosystems that landowners can use as a model for their own restorations. These properties are also open for low-impact recreation, such as hiking, bird watching, and limited hunting.

BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT

The Blue Mounds Area project is a community-based organization that seeks to inspire, inform, and empower private landowners in southwestern Wisconsin to enjoy, protect, and restore native biodiversity and ecosystem health. It has helped landowners on more than 13,000 acres to understand and manage their natural resources.

Tools:

- Direct landowner outreach and technical assistance, including site assessments, with advice on using the tools listed in this toolbox.
- Information about native plant, animal, and habitat identification.
- Contacts for restoration, native plant seed sources and other information
- Internet-based list service to share and learn with others about land restoration and facilitate cooperative, volunteer restoration and management activities.
- Community education focused on native landscape restoration.
- Experts to speak to groups about the value of our native landscape and what can be done to protect and restore it.

Contacts:

Cindy Ramseyer, Ecologist
ecologist@bluemounds.org
www.bluemounds.org

Carroll Schaal, President
(608) 437-6247
info@bluemounds.org

COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION DEPARTMENTS

County Land Conservation Departments (LCD) provide technical service and conservation planning assistance to landowners and government units to help them meet their conservation objectives. Staff will assess sources of erosion or pollution with the landowner and draft suggested solutions. If the landowner decides to install conservation practices, the LCD staff supervises the design and construction of the project and certifies it upon completion. Limited funds are available for some practices.

Tools:

- Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program
- Conservation Programs
- Animal Waste Management
- Erosion Control Plans

Contacts:

Pat Sutter, Dane County Conservationist
(608) 224-3730
sutter@co.dane.wi.us

Jim McCaulley, Iowa County Conservationist
(608) 935-2791 ext. 3
jim.mccaulley@wi.nacdn.net

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Department of Natural Resources is dedicated to the preservation, protection, effective management, and maintenance of Wisconsin's natural resources. It is the one state agency charged with full responsibility for coordinating the many disciplines and programs necessary to provide a clean environment and a full range of outdoor recreational opportunities for Wisconsin citizens and visitors.

Tools:

- Technical assistance on private land.
- Acceptance of donations of land of high environmental significance.
- Purchase of easements along trout streams to provide public fishing access.
- Grants to local governments and conservation organizations for purchasing easements and restoring habitat.
- Grants for restoration on private land.

Contacts:

Local service centers:

Dane County
3911 Fish Hatchery Rd, Fitchburg
(608) 275-3266

Iowa County
1500 N Johns St, Dodgeville
(608) 935-3368

Landowner Incentive Program (LIP): grant program that provides technical assistance and up to 75% cost-sharing to help private landowners manage and restore habitat for rare species.

Heidi Nelson, LIP Coordinator
(608) 267-0797

Wildlife management and technical assistance for managing grassland habitat:

Bruce Folley, Wildlife Biologist, Darlington
(608) 575-9288
bruce.folley@wisconsin.gov

Fisheries management including trout stream easements and habitat improvement:

Bradd Sims, Fisheries Biologist, Dodgeville (608) 935-1935 bradd.sims@wisconsin.gov	Kurt Welke, Fisheries Biologist, Fitchburg (608) 273-5946 kurt.welke@wisconsin.gov
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Technical assistance for watershed planning and water quality management:

Jim Amrhein, Water Resources Management Specialist, Fitchburg
(608) 275-3280
james.amrhein@wisconsin.gov

DRIFTLESS AREA LAND CONSERVANCY

The Driftless Area Land Conservancy is a private, non-profit land trust dedicated to protecting the rural landscape and quality of life in southwestern Wisconsin. Established in 2000 in response to unguided sprawl from urban centers, the Conservancy's mission is to preserve open space and unique lands, including farms, forests, grasslands, and wetlands.

Tools:

- Voluntary conservation agreements with landowners, acceptance of title to donated lands, and the purchase of easements on farmland and sensitive lands.
- Technical assistance with forestry, botany, archeology, geology, economics, law, agriculture, prairie restoration, and water quality.

Contact:

Doug Cieslak, Executive Director
338 N Iowa Street Dodgeville, WI 53533
(608) 930-3252
driftless@mhtc.net
www.driftlesslandtrust.org

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

A branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS's county-based offices provide technical services to farmers and administer a wide array of federal conservation programs. The NRCS mission is to provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. Listed below are five NRCS programs that support natural resource management in Wisconsin. Specific priorities, practices and eligibility requirements under each program vary frequently.

Tools:

- **Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement**

The Conservation Reserve Program and its offshoots Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) are voluntary programs for agricultural landowners. Producers enrolled in these programs remove land from agricultural production and plant perennial vegetation to improve water quality, soil, and wildlife habitat. Under these programs landowners receive rental payments and cost-share assistance for installing specific conservation practices. CREP is targeted toward land next to rivers and streams and includes an option for permanent easements, while SAFE targets a specific geographic area.

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

EQIP is a voluntary program to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on farm land. NRCS offers technical assistance and partial funding to install practices such as animal waste management facilities, terraces, filter strips, nutrient management, pest management, and rotational grazing. Agreements of up to 10 years are made with eligible producers.

- **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)**

WHIP is a voluntary program for people who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private land. It provides technical assistance and partial funding for restoration and management work on both upland and aquatic habitat. It is a competitive program, where each project is assigned points based on a number of criteria including size of the project and presence of endangered species.

- **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)**

This voluntary program offers landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection.

- **Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)**

GRP offers expertise and land payments to support permanent pasture and hay land. To qualify, grassland must be at least 40 contiguous acres or have some outstanding resource value. The program is competitive. Applicants are chosen according to a point system based on the land's proximity to cities, fertile soils, percentage unplowed sod, stocking rate and other factors.

Contacts:

Ben Zwiefelhofer, Soil Conservationist (Iowa Co.)
138 S Iowa Street, Suite 3 Dodgeville WI 53533
(608) 935-2791 ext. 3
ben.zwiefelhofer@wi.usda.gov

Dane Co. Land Conservation/NRCS
1 Fen Oak Court, Room 208
Madison, WI 53718-8812
(608) 224-3730

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY (TNC)

The Nature Conservancy is an international non-profit conservation organization whose mission is to preserve native plants and animals by protecting the habitats they need to survive. TNC has been working in Wisconsin since 1960 and first became involved in protecting land in the MRPHA in 1964. In the MRPHA, the Conservancy is primarily focused on 1) protecting native prairies and other grasslands for the benefit of grassland birds and other prairie dwelling species; 2) protecting the water quality of area streams; and 3) maintaining the open rural character of the landscape. The Nature Conservancy owns two preserves: Thomson Memorial Prairie and Barneveld Prairie. Conservancy preserves are open to the public for low-impact recreational activities such as hiking, cross-country skiing, bird-watching, and limited hunting.

Tool:

- Purchase or accept donations of land of interest from willing landowners whose property meets Nature Conservancy conservation goals.

Contact:

Steve Richter, Director of Conservation Southwestern WI
(608) 356-5300 or (608) 577-3076
srichter@tnc.org
www.nature.org/wisconsin

PHEASANTS FOREVER

The mission of Pheasants Forever (PF) is to conserve and to enhance pheasant and other wildlife populations through habitat restoration, improvements in land, water, wildlife and water management policies and public awareness and education. PF has chapters both in Iowa and Dane Counties. Each chapter also has a professional Habitat Team that assists landowners with planning habitat, planting, mowing, burning and maintaining their property for wildlife at a very reasonable cost to the landowner.

Tools:

- Habitat specialists through Habitat Forever for management assistance.
- Inexpensively rent out seed drill and sprayer that can be pulled by an ATV.
- Seminars for teachers on conservation and environmental issues.

Contacts:

Jeff Gaska, Regional Representative: (920) 927-3579, jgaska@pheasantsforever.org
www.pheasantsforever.org

Farm Bill Biologists:

Melissa Keenan (Iowa Co)
(608) 647-8874 x114

mkeenan@pheasantsforever.org

Eric Krueger (Dane Co.)

(608) 742-5361x108

ekrueger@pheasantsforever.org

PRIVATE CONTRACTORS

Private contractors provide a variety of services for a fee. Services may include site inventories, management planning, native plantings, invasive species control, prescribed burning, and tree and brush removal. The MRPHA project coordinator maintains a list of local contractors. Contact her for more information: (608)935-2791 x134, katie.abbott@rcdnet.net.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS (RC&D)

RC&D is rural development program focusing on the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources to improve the standard of living in our area. It joins forces with individuals, agencies, and groups to improve the social, economic, and environmental opportunities of the local area.

Tools:

- Advice and planning regarding grazing, invasive species, forestry, and other topics.

Contacts:

Iowa Co.: Southwest Badger RC&D

(608)723-6377 ext. 4

www.swbadger.com

Grazing specialist Gene Schriefer: gene.schriefer@rcdnet.net

Forest invasive species specialist Dan Bohlin: endoway1@tds.net

Dane Co.: Town & Country RC&D

(262) 335-4855

www.townandcountryrcd.org

THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS (TPE)

The Prairie Enthusiasts is a grassroots organization committed to the protection and management of native prairie and savanna of the Upper Midwest. TPE actively manages 97 prairie and savanna remnants across Wisconsin, Illinois and Minnesota. TPE is run almost entirely by volunteers and has more than 1,000 members in 8 chapters. Most of the patches of original prairie documented in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area were originally recognized by Prairie Enthusiasts volunteers.

Tools:

- Remnants searches and species inventories. Landowner contacts to inform them of the biological significance of their sites and the care they need.
- Site protection through acquisitions, easements and management agreements.
- Prescribed burning, brush removal and exotic plant control on high quality prairie and savanna remnants.
- Plant prairie species both on our own properties and other conservation lands to increase prairie habitat and to provide educational opportunities for the public.
- Development of educational materials and presentations on prairie and savanna ecology, conservation and management for both children and adults.
- Maintenance of nursery beds of prairie species to produce local genotype seeds.

Contacts:

www.theprairieenthusiasts.org

Rich Henderson

Empire-Sauk Chapter (covers eastern Iowa, Dane, Columbia, and Sauk Counties)

(608) 845-7065

tpe.rhenderson@tds.net

Jesse Bennett

Southwest WI Chapter (covers western Iowa, Crawford, Grant, and Richland counties)

(608) 996-2135

jjess@tds.net

TROUT UNLIMITED (TU) SOUTHERN WISCONSIN CHAPTER (Dane Co)

Trout Unlimited's mission is to conserve, protect and restore North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds. The Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited has been working on coldwater resources within Dane county for over 30 years. The Military Ridge area lies well within the fishing range of our 600 members. Gordon Creek is a very fine trout stream and TU has a keen interest in preserving the entire watershed. The Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited has a rich history of conservation. They have worked with federal, state, county, and municipal units of government to accomplish project goals. They have also partnered with numerous private organizations to raise money and coordinate project work. Over the last few years, TU has served as a pass-through organization for more than a million dollars in conservation funds. Numerous conservation professionals count themselves as Chapter members.

Tools:

- "Sweat equity" for stream bank management.
- Dollars towards coldwater conservation efforts.

Contact:

Dave Sanders, President
(608) 843-7125
daveandcheri@charter.net

TROUT UNLIMITED HARRY AND LAURA NOHR CHAPTER (Iowa Co)

The Harry and Laura Nohr chapter of Trout Unlimited is one of 22 chapters in Wisconsin. The Nohr Chapter serves the interests of Grant, Iowa, and Lafayette counties. This chapter aims to "work to conserve and preserve the trout as a game fish, promote trout angling in a sportsmanlike manner, and work with constituted authorities and other conservation organizations, through scientific, yet practical, trout management; through land, water, and watershed management to provide desirable food and habitat; through fishing regulations to preserve and increase the trout population; and through dissemination of full and accurate information to the members and the general public". They have recently been active in the area of the upper Blue River and Big Spring having stabilized and improved habitat on over 2 miles of each as well as participating on work on numerous other streams in SW Wisconsin. In addition, they have provided grants to numerous school districts for study related to cold water resources and have a summer college intern program that puts two college students from UWP on streams in SW Wisconsin doing stream studies.

Tools:

- Access to a number of other chapters willing to provide manpower to do stream work such as assembling structures and cutting brush and trees.
- A trailer with generators, air compressors, drills, nail guns, and other tools needed to assemble in-stream trout habitat structures.
- Access to a competent contractor who knows how to properly install habitat structures and stabilize stream banks.
- Knowledge of grant possibilities and people experienced at successfully writing grant requests.

Contact:

Brian Larson, President
blarson@pcii.net

**U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
PARTNERS FOR FISH & WILDLIFE PROGRAM**

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service administers the Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program. This is a national program that began in 1987 and works with private landowners, municipalities, and local governments to improve their lands for wildlife. Over the last five years, the Partners Program has increased its focus on grassland habitats due to the decline in grassland associated

migratory bird species. In Iowa and Dane county, the Wisconsin Private Lands Office has worked with numerous landowners to restore native prairie pastures and plant prairie grasses and forbs on retired cropland. The Service provides technical and financial assistance while working one-on-one with landowners to control exotic species like multi-flora rose, buckthorn, and black locust, fencing pastures to manage grazing pressure, prescribed burning to stimulate native vegetation, inter-seeding native species, cutting invasive tree species to restore oak savanna landscapes, and removing woody fencerows to provide an open landscape for grassland birds. The program works because the landowner is involved and sets goals for their project, the program is very flexible, and landowners work directly with a Service biologist.

Tools:

- Technical assistance on prairie, savanna, and wetland restoration.
- Removal of tree lines next to large grass fields.
- Up to 100% funding for restoration costs.

Contact:

Shawn Papon, Wildlife Biologist
4511 Helgesen Drive Madison, WI 53718
(608) 221-1206 x16
Shawn_Papon@fws.gov

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

With an office in each Wisconsin county, Cooperative Extension develops practical educational programs tailored to local needs and based on university knowledge and research. County-based Extension educators are University of Wisconsin faculty and staff who are experts in agriculture and agribusiness, community and economic development, natural resources, family living and youth development. Collaboration between county and campus faculty is the hallmark of Cooperative Extension in Wisconsin.

Tools:

- Numerous publications and education programs regarding natural resources and agriculture.

Contact:

Dane County
1 Fen Oak Court, Room 138 Madison, WI 53718-8812
(608) 224-3700
www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/dane

Iowa County
222 N Iowa St, Suite 1 Dodgeville WI 53533
(608) 935-0391
www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/iowa