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PRAIRIE RESTORATION PROJECT IN THE WORKS EAST OF WARREN

May 12, 2023 (Bemidji, MN) – A Prairie Restoration Project is expected to occur in May at a site east of Warren.

Prairie grasslands are home to a wide variety of wildlife species. Yet, natural prairie habitats are often few and far between given our vast agricultural landscape here in the region. The Northwest Minnesota Foundation has been working to restore prairie habitat for nearly 15 years on Conservation Reserve Program fields located within the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District (MSTRWD) impoundment east of Warren.

The 400 acres under NMF management was originally part of the Eldor and Stella Omdahl farm prior to the installation of an overland flood protection system managed by the MSTRWD. This flood mitigation tool is referred to as the “impoundment” because holds excess water during spring flooding to reduce flood damage to properties within the watershed.

After some challenging public acquisitions of private lands during the establishment of the flood water impoundment, the Omdahls gifted a portion of their resources to promote wildlife conservation practices. Through their generosity, they entrusted NMF to manage the fields for the benefit of the Agassiz Audubon Society, and to provide grant funding to other conversation organizations through the Eldor and Stella Omdahl Conservation Fund.

Sometime this month, NMF expects to complete a prescribed burn to fulfill their mid-contract management responsibility on their CRP fields within the impoundment. NMF, in close partnership with the MSTRWD, has secured a Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources grant from the Habitat Enhancement Landscape Pilot program. This grant will help with the cost of site preparation, burning and seeding prairie grasses and flowers. The idea is to knock down the weeds, willows, volunteer trees and buckthorn, while seeding a greater variety of pollinator-friendly plants. These improvements will increase the quality of prairie habitat by reducing unwanted and invasive plant species, while boosting nutrients with a diversity of native wildlife and plants.



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"This is a very exciting time for us. A lot of planning has gone into this effort," said Nate Dorr, NMF's Vice President for Advocacy and the farm operator for the project. "We hope this project can demonstrate best practices in prairie restoration, while showcasing the partnerships that it takes to get something like this accomplished."

NMF has hired Prairie Restorations, Inc. to handle the prescribed burn and seeding, and is working with local contractor Danni Jarshaw to help with site preparations. Other partners that have provided support and guidance include the Agassiz Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, West Polk Soil and Water Conservation District, and the USDA Farm Service Agency.

Area residents should know the project is fully permitted and insured. Traffic in the area of 260th Avenue NW (Polk Co 68 / Marshall Co 36) and between 210th Street NW and 190th Street NW, east of Warren and south of Radium, may be temporarily impacted.

NMF and its partners want to encourage citizen scientists and casual observers to take note of changes to the landscape from before the burn into the months after to see the impact of fire to the landscape.

Questions and comments about the project or the project's conservation goals may be addressed to Nate Dorr, Vice President for Advocacy, at Northwest Minnesota Foundation.

NMF believes Northwest Minnesota offers boundless opportunities.

Our strength is connecting people, places, and possibilities.

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