

Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant Application

Name of Organization: Pheasants Forever, Inc.
Federal Tax ID#: 41-1429149
Contact Person/Title: Matt Olson, Regional Representative
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List names of co-applicants if this is a joint proposal: N/A

MAJOR Directive: Choose only one response

X **Directive B.** Improve, maintain, and restore water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and to support other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

Additional Directive: Choose all that apply

X **Directive A.** Provide access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;

X **Directive C.** Develop, enhance, conserve, and restore wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

Type of organization:

X Tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation, as described in United States Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. § 501 (c))

Project Name: North Dakota Pollinator Partnership

Abstract/Executive Summary: North Dakota is the number one honey producing state in the nation by a 2 to 1 margin. In 2012, honey produced through commercial bee farming was valued at \$64.5 million. Unfortunately, native pollinator and honey bee habitat is rapidly declining in our state due to the conversion of native prairie and the loss of CRP. For example, between 2007 and 2013, 1,595,672 acres of CRP expired from the program. Additionally, another 585,829 acres of CRP is set to expire in North Dakota between 2014 and 2017 including 143,612 on September 30, 2014. The loss of CRP in three short years is greater than a two mile-wide swath of habitat from Fargo to Beach!

This proposal seeks to address the loss & degradation of pollinator habitat by forging a partnership with the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), beekeepers, landowners and Pheasants Forever. Improved pollinator and upland bird habitat will be achieved by augmenting existing USDA's Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) by doing the following:

1. North Dakota OHF will be used to pay for the increased cost associated with customized and optimal seed mixes for pollinators on newly established 30-year WRP contracts.
2. North Dakota OHF would be used to upgrade existing WRP contracts which are currently dominated by stands of monotypic cover. This will include best practices of site preparation, seed, seeding, and clipping in order to establish high diversity plantings that are excellent habitat for upland wildlife and native and domestic pollinators.

Some seed mixes, especially those that include forbs that are less common, are more expensive on the commercial seed market. We hope to build available, affordable, and functional seed mixes for WRP and other programs that have a significant beneficial impact on the quality of our existing conservation program cover. Increased diversity improves habitat for upland game birds as well as pollinators, as we know that where we increase diversity, we also increase insect habitat (including pollinator forage and nest site habitat) that is ideal for brood rearing (2, 3).

Specifically, during the next two years PF and NRCS will restore, enhance and create 1,250 acres of WRP acres by:

- 1) Upgrading seed mixes used on new WRP tracts from a standard mix containing 8-10 species to a customized high diversity mix containing 25-30 species (see example in Attachment A);
- 2) Enhancing plant diversity on existing and new WRP tracts by replacing monotypic stands of brome with high diversity pollinator mixes;

The total cost of these projects is \$292,879 and the request from the OHF is \$173,750. This represents a 0.7:1 leverage rate, far exceeding the 0.25 ratio suggested.

The primary participants in this partnership will be the OHF, PF, NRCS, private landowners and beekeepers. Contracts for enhancement and restoration that are within two miles of an apiary and/or enrolled into ND Game and Fish access program PLOTS will be prioritized. These criteria are being added to address as many of the directives of the OHF as possible.

Amount of Grant request \$173,750

Total Project Costs \$292,879

(Note that in-kind and indirect costs can be used for matching funds)

A minimum of 25% Match Funding is strongly encouraged.

Amount of Matching Funds: \$119,129 of which \$59,129 is in-kind and \$60,000 is cash match
Please indicate if the matching funds will be in-kind, indirect or cash.

Source(s) of Matching Funds

Please provide verification that these matching funds are available for your project.

Pheasants Forever - \$39,129 in donated indirect expenses to carry out the work of this proposal.
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - \$60,000 in restoration costs of WRP contracts, see letter of support.

Landowners (WRP cost-share for the restoration) - \$20,000 in restoration costs of WRP contracts currently in cropland, please see NRCS letter of support, 25% of baseline cropland restoration costs are required by the WRP program.

Certifications:

X I certify that this application has been made with the support of the governing body and chief executive of my organization.

X I certify that if awarded grant funding none of the funding will be used for any of the exemptions noted on Page 1 of this application.

Narrative

Organization Information – Include an overview of your organizational structure, including board, staff and volunteer involvement. (no more than 300 words)

Pheasants Forever (PF) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of pheasants, quail, and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education and land management policies and programs. Formed in 1982 in response to declining pheasant populations, PF has grown to over 140,000 members and 650 chapters across North America. The board of directors includes the President/CEO and 14 volunteers from across the country. One key to PF's success has been the model of empowering local chapters to decide how funds are raised and invested to impact the Pheasants Forever mission. North Dakota is currently home to 27 Pheasants Forever chapters, 200 volunteers and more than 4,000 members. Pheasants Forever chapters hold annual fundraising events, support statewide partnerships and programs, work on habitat projects, and promote youth outdoor education. North Dakota Pheasants Forever currently has six biologists, including a regional representative (Forman, ND) and five farm bill wildlife biologists located across ND. Pheasants Forever's tagline is "*The Habitat Organization*" and we bring a unique model and mission that empowers local people to impact local habitat for pheasants and other wildlife in meaningful ways across North Dakota.

Purpose of Grant – Describe the proposed project identifying how the project will meet the specific directive(s) of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Program

Identify project goals, strategies and benefits and your timetable for implementation. Include information about the need for the project and whether there is urgency for funding. Please indicate if this is a new project or if it is replacing funding that is no longer available to your organization. Identify any innovative features or processes of your project.

North Dakota farmers, ranchers and other landowners in partnership with beekeepers have made the state number one in honey production. According to the 2014 ND Department of Agriculture Pollinator Plan (1), beekeepers bring approximately 500,000 hives into the state each summer. In 2012, more than 34 million pounds of honey were produced which is twice as much as the number two state

(SD). This important agricultural product had an economic value of more than \$64.5 million. Clearly, honey is a valued commodity in our state and its future should not be taken for granted. Additionally, some North Dakota commodity crops also benefit from the abundance of hives in the state during the growing season. The North Dakota Pollinator Plan (1) also cites that “*although not completely dependent on insect pollination, crops such as canola, dry edible beans, buckwheat, and sunflowers have been shown to greatly benefit from bee pollination.*”

There are many challenges facing the future of beekeeping and honey production in North Dakota and nationally. According to the USDA Agricultural Research Service, in 2006 some apiarists reported losses ranging from 30 to 90 percent of their hives. This phenomenon has been termed Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) and researchers are still working to pin-point the exact cause. However, it is widely-accepted that when hives return to North Dakota, they are weakened and vulnerable due to their winter pollination services in other states such as helping pollinate 800,000 acres of almond trees in California with a value of more than \$3 billion in 2011.

The *North Dakota Pollinator Plan* lists the planting of bee forage as one of six best management practices for landowners and growers. Simply put, this proposal is intended to help deliver this recommendation by providing higher quality and more abundant flowering vegetation on private lands. Specifically, the plan states:

Plants that support pollinators are also beneficial for other wildlife, are often visually attractive, and can help improve soil health. It is important to consider diversity when choosing plants to ensure adequate forage for the entire growing season. Diversity will also ensure pollinators have access to all of the nutrients they require to be healthy.

The primary purpose of this proposal is to increase flowering plant diversity for the benefit of honey bees, native pollinators, pheasants, sharp-tail grouse, and other wildlife. This purpose is intended to directly deliver three of the four Outdoor Heritage Fund directives including as the primary rationale: Directive B – plant diversity, but also Directive A, improving the quality of habitat on access lands, and Directive C, wildlife habitat on private lands. This is a new dimension to PF’s habitat programs in North Dakota and therefore no baseline funding is available other than possibly from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund at this point in time.

During the next two years, the goal is to restore or enhance 1,250 acres exclusively on privately owned land in partnership with the NRCS and other partners to compliment, accelerate and expand the quality of habitat established on private lands via popular USDA programs such as WRP. The approach described below is intended to allow for the work to be completed by efficiently dovetailing with USDA programs, specifically WRP.

The strategies we will utilize to accomplish this purpose and goal will include:

- 1) Restoring 1,000 acres of high-diversity prairie/pollinator habitat on new WRP tracts being converted from cropland to upland habitat;

NRCS currently has 60,000 acres of WRP with approximately 5,000 acres of upland habitat in process. Once contracts are finalized and the restoration phase can proceed, PF will work closely with the local NRCS field office to agree upon an upgraded seed mixture that addresses the needs of NRCS specifications, pollinator forage and wildlife. With funding from OHF, PF will contribute the difference (estimated to be approximately \$100 per acre) between the standard mix and the upgraded mix (See Exhibit A for an example comparison). The

payments will be made directly to the entity delivering the upland restoration, either the landowner or the contractor.

- 2) Enhancing 250-acres of high-diversity prairie/pollinator habitat on **new or existing** WRP tracts that are currently dominated by monotypic brome stands that provide little value to brood rearing for upland game birds or pollinators;

NRCS currently has approximately 60,000 acres of WRP in North Dakota. Many of these sites were formerly enrolled in the CRP and therefore the seed mixes were designed for 10 or 15 years and were most likely established prior our understanding of the “plight of the pollinators”. While these private lands are certainly providing habitat for wildlife and are serving their primary purpose, they could be enhanced to provide additional benefits for honey bees and native pollinators by increasing the vegetative diversity on the upland acres. Using criteria such as proximity to hives, enrollment in PLOTS and other factors, PF Farm Bill Biologists will work closely with NRCS field offices and private landowners to upgrade the cover using a multi-step process that consists of: 1) removing above-ground biomass through haying or burning; 2) chemically treating the re-growth in fall before dormancy; 3) applying second chemical treatment to ensure existing monotypic stand of smooth brome grass or Kentucky bluegrass has been adequately killed; 4) contracting with custom seed company to drill or broadcast high-diversity mixture; 5) clipping regrowth 1-2 times to reduce weed competition and ensure a quality stand is established. Landowner adoption of this improved habitat practice will be based upon our partnerships ability to make these upgrades as hassle-free for the landowners as possible. Once a new stand is established, it will provide optimal pollinator and wildlife habitat and increased forage (tons/acre) for those landowners who seek to hay the properties under an NRCS compatible use permit.

Management of Project – Provide a description of how you will manage and oversee the project to ensure it is carried out on schedule and in a manner that best ensures its objectives will be met.

Include a brief background and work experience for those managing the project.

The project manager is Pheasants Forever's North Dakota regional representative, Matt Olson. A North Dakota native, Matt resides in Lisbon. Olson earned an A.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Management in May of 2003 from Minot State University-Bottineau, prior to completing a B.S. in Zoology with an emphasis in Wildlife and Fisheries Management in May of 2005 from North Dakota State University. He has served as a Farm Bill Biologist in Forman, ND for the last four years working with farmers and ranchers on habitat conservation programs. He has considerable experience in delivering USDA conservation programs like CRP and WRP, which includes significant paper work, reporting, follow through and attention to detail.

Pete Berthelsen, PF's National Director of Habitat Partnerships has been with the organization for 23 years. Peter has a B.S. in wildlife management from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (1985) and M.S. in wildlife management from Texas Tech University (1989). During his tenure with PF, he has helped design USDA-NRCS Field Office Technical Guide specifications, provided USDA staff training, administers 40+ partnerships and grants, and has over 20 years of experience in coordinating national and state-level habitat tours and wildlife workshops.

Matt and Pete also have the support of Pheasants Forever's grant development and grant administration teams along with the North Region Leadership to assist with proper grant administration, financial reporting and contracting.

Evaluation – Describe your plan to document progress and results.

How will you tell if the project is successful? Please be specific on the methods you will utilize to measure success. Note that regular reporting, final evaluation and expenditure reports will be required for every grant awarded.

PF will measure the success by reporting directly on the deliverables outlined above. Private lands enrolled in WRP will be annually monitored and this action will provide the opportunity to evaluate the condition of the upland restoration and enhancement efforts. NRCS has developed specific monitoring protocols which will be carried out by the appropriate NRCS staff with the assistance of PF Farm Bill Biologists when necessary. Pheasants Forever will work with landowners and our partners to set up a demonstration tours that highlight and exhibit the benefits to wildlife, including upland birds and pollinators.

Financial Information

ATTACHMENT: Project Budget – Using the standard project budget format that is available on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm> , please include a detailed total project budget that specifically outlines all the funds you are requesting. Note that a minimum of 25% match funding is strongly encouraged.*

The project budget should identify all matching funds, funding sources and indicate whether the matching funds are in the form of cash or in-kind services. As noted on the standard project budget format, certain values have been identified for in-kind services. Please utilize these values in identifying your matching funds. **NOTE: No indirect costs will be funded.**

X I certify that a project budget will be sent to the Commission

Sustainability – Indicate how the project will be funded or sustained in future years.

Include information on the sustainability of this project after all the funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund has been expended and whether the sustainability will be in the form of ongoing management or additional funding from a different source.

Active management of upland habitat is critical to maintain productive nesting and brood-rearing cover for upland game birds. Additionally, periodic disturbance is critical to set back aggressive species and encourage plant diversity. The benefits of the restoration and enhancement projects proposed here will have immediate short-term benefits and have the potential to be sustained for the life of the WRP contracts involved. Provided active management (prescribed haying, grazing, fire) takes place periodically on these sites, the benefits of funded projects will sustain throughout the life of the WRP contracts (up to 30-years).

If successful, PF would seek additional funds to expand and accelerate diversity enhancements to known, successful and working programs in ND. We would engage the ND Department of Agriculture, the honey bee industry, cattlemen, and other groups and agencies with an interest in pollinators and high quality upland habitat.

Partial Funding – Indicate how the project will be affected if less funding is available than that requested.

If provided less funding, Pheasants Forever and its partners will impact fewer acres and help fewer North Dakota landowners achieve their conservation goals. Should less funding be awarded, PF will

scale back accomplishments and evaluate with our partners how to best proceed and achieve results with a reduced budget.

Pheasants Forever can meet the provisions of the contract proposed by the North Dakota Industrial Commission.

Citations

1. The *North Dakota Pollinator Plan* (2013) can be found at the ND Department of Agriculture link here: www.nd.gov/ndda/files/resource/NorthDakotaPollinatorPlan2014.pdf

2. The *North Dakota Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy* (2005) can be found at the ND Game & Fish website here: <http://gf.nd.gov/gnf/conservation/docs/North-Dakota-Wildlife-Action-Plan.pdf>

3. The National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan (2013) can be found on the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies website here:
<http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/NationalWildPheasantConservationPlan.pdf>

Budget Standard Form
North Dakota Pollinator Partnership

Project Expense	OHF Request	NRCS Cash Match	Pheasants Forever (Indirect)	Private Landowners
Upland Enhancements	\$ 73,750	\$ 0	\$ 16,609	\$ 0
Upland Restoration	\$ 100,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 22,520	\$ 20,000
	\$	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total Project Costs	\$ 173,750	\$ 60,000	\$ 39,129	\$ 20,000

Upland Enhancements includes: \$73,750 from OHF for the enhancement of 250 acres of new or existing private lands enrolled in WRP to a high-diversity seeding that will provide significant benefits to wildlife and pollinators. Sites will be prioritized that are enrolled in PLOTS and/or have an apiary within 2 miles. Costs include seed (estimated \$180/acre), seeding (\$25/acre), herbicide treatments (\$30/acre x 2), and clipping (\$15/acre x 2) as needed for establishment. \$16,609 of indirect match will be provided by Pheasants Forever.

Upland Restoration includes: \$100,000 from OHF to augment seed mixes on 1,000 acres of private lands newly enrolled into WRP. This is based on an estimate of \$100/acre increased seed cost to upgrade mixes to high quality mixes that include significantly more forbs/flowers/legumes and consider bloom period for pollinator foraging habitat. PF commits \$22,520 of indirect match and landowners will contribute \$20,000 as required by WRP program specifications. NRCS will contribute \$60,000 for upland restoration of new WRP contracts.

*WRP is a voluntary, incentive based USDA program available to North Dakotans to protect, restore and enhance wetland and upland habitats. WRP provides critical habitat for breeding waterfowl and also provides significant habitat for upland birds, mammals, pollinators, etc., while providing water quality benefits.



Natural Resources
Conservation Service

April 1, 2014

PO Box 1458
Bismarck, ND
58502-1458
Voice 701.530.2000

Mr. Wade Moser, Chair
North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board
600 E Boulevard Ave. Dept. 405
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501

Dear Mr. Moser:

The Outdoor Heritage Fund often receives proposals that are similar in nature to the voluntary, ag-based financial assistance programs that U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) provides to producers across North Dakota. As with all federal dollars, sometimes we fall short of the need on the land. It is through our partnerships that we can provide the best technical and financial assistance to the agricultural producers that exemplify stewardship.

Please consider this a letter of support to the "North Dakota Pollinator Partnership" proposal submitted by our partners at Pheasants Forever. I fully support the effort of Pheasants Forever to work with private landowners to place the highest quality of conservation cover on the landscape through voluntary programs and incentives for the value of the conservation practice. This proposal will be value-added to the landscape by providing the producer additional options to increase pollinator habitat. It will pair nicely with our wetland restoration programs that assist a producer with protection of the resources but do not provide any cost to enhance.

I look forward to working collaboratively with the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund to improve habitat and the natural resources of North Dakota.

Sincerely,

MARY E. PODOLL
State Conservationist
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

cc:
Matt Olson, Regional Representative, Pheasants Forever, Bismarck, ND