

Model Project Subcommittee Report
November 30, 2015

Previously you were provided the following information regarding the actions of the Outdoor Heritage Advisory Board Model Project Subcommittee.

The Outdoor Heritage Fund Model Project Subcommittee met on August 18, 2015 with the following members present: Dr. Tom Hutchens, Jim Melchior, Wade Moser, Patricia Stockdill. Because of scheduling conflicts the absent members were Eric Aasmundstad and Kent Reiersen

Also in attendance were:

*Rhonda Vetsch, Emmons County Soil Conservation District
Terry Steinwand, Game and Fish
Kevin Kading, Game and Fish
John Devney, Delta Waterfowl
Jonas Davis, Ducks Unlimited
Keith Trego, ND Natural Resources Trust
Andrea Travnicek, ND Governor's Office*

Dr. Tom Hutchens was elected to serve as Chairman of the Subcommittee.

After presentations by Rhonda Vetsch, Emmons County Soil Conservation District, and Kevin Kading and Terry Steinwand, Game and Fish Department, and discussion by the subcommittee members and others in attendance the following action was taken by the Outdoor Heritage Fund Model Project Subcommittee:

It was moved by Wade Moser and seconded by Jim Melchior that the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board ask that the local Soil Conservation Districts take the lead, along with identifying willing partners, in putting conservation proposals together (similar to the Emmons County Grant Round 5 proposal) that would:

- 1. Identify expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts and convert these lands to production by installing practices (water, fences & management) that would promote leaving these lands in grass (or reseeding specific species to improve the grass stand) that will make them useful for grazing.***
- 2. Identify existing grasslands that need improvements (water, fences & management) through installing conservation practices and management changes.***
- 3. Identify tracts of poor quality tillable and saline land that should be converted to grass for grazing, haying, and wildlife by implementing the appropriate conservation practices.***
- 4. Identify participant's names and contact information and make them available for public access requests.***

These lands be given a high priority in funding through the Outdoor Heritage Fund by providing cost share for installing conservation practices as well as provide funds to the local Soil Conservation Districts for additional staffing to implement these projects.

The goal is to provide more acres of high quality productive grassland that will benefit both livestock and wildlife.

On a roll call vote, Moser, Melchior, Stockdill and Hutchens voted aye and no one voted nay. The motion carried unanimously.

Some of the points discussed included:

- Applicants could be one soil conservation district or multiple soil conservation districts;
- Applicants could be an entity other than a soil conservation district but should work with a soil conservation district, needs to be a clear understanding of who is in charge and who is liable as it relates to oversight/management;
- Details on what management requirements are included in the Emmons County proposal such as weed control, haying dates, active management by the applicant such as two visits a year with the landowner at the land site;
- When payments are made;
- What should be done in those areas where grazing/haying is not cost effective such as around Cando or Forman;
- What are the risks if the landowner does not properly manage the lands after already receiving payments;
- Importance of having grassroots partnerships;
- Consider open, flexible projects that meet the needs of the producers;
- Success will be promoting proper management of the land--the producer has to manage the land and not just implement a best management practice and then not manage the land;
- This proposal isn't the answer to all the issues but is a start and one where we believe there is sufficient funding within the Outdoor Heritage Fund to begin the implementation of moving CRP acres into working lands that benefit both the producer and the wildlife interests;
- A different proposal may be needed for wetland or saline areas;
- Land rental payments; incentive payments; when are they needed; this model concept does not include land rental payments being made by the Outdoor Heritage Fund; don't believe it is necessary at this point; if partners are willing to make the land rental payments the application will be looked at but is not preferred;
- A different proposal with incentive payments may be needed where lands are productive but that should come at a later date;
- Some concerns about whether there is the manpower to initiate the best management practices;
- If adopted by the Commission and the OHF Advisory Board how will it be rolled out?

It was clearly stated that this model project does not exclude any other proposal from being submitted and considered. This model project has been developed based on questions from applicants as to what we are looking for in the "larger" countywide/regional/statewide projects.

Karlene was asked to find a date for another meeting -- to look at the concepts that Terry Steinwand had presented, in particular the concept for state lands.

On September 16 the OHF Advisory Board was provided a transcript of the discussion that took place at the August 26 Industrial Commission meeting. No action was taken by the Commission at their meeting. They indicated that the concept presented had merit and suggested that there may be a need for an additional concept for the Subcommittee to discuss. The Governor indicated that he had some thoughts about a concept that he wanted to present to the Subcommittee. **The Governor is in the process of finalizing that concept and has asked that the next Subcommittee meeting be scheduled when he can attend and discuss his concept. At this point the Subcommittee is in a holding pattern.**