

Northern Great Plains Joint Venture

Northern Grasslands Restoration Incentives Program

(N-GRIP)

Grants-2019



Funding Guidelines

3 May 2019

Guidelines, requirements and review criteria for habitat conservation grants administered through the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture. All grant requests to the JV must adhere to these guidelines for consideration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL INFORMATION	Page
Introduction	3
Intent of the Program	3
Funding Availability	4
Who Should Apply	4
Grant Agreement	4
Reporting Requirements	4
Timeline	4
REQUIRED PROPOSAL COMPONENTS	
Eligible Proposals	5
Ineligible Proposals	5
Partnerships	6
Fund Leveraging	6
Technical Scoring Criteria and Point Values	6
PROPOSAL FORMAT AND SUBMISSION	
Cover Page	8
General Project Description	8
Specific Project Criteria	9
Budget Tables	10
Project Map, Partner Contribution Statements, Letters of Support and Photos	10
Proposal Submission	10
APPENDICES	
A. Priority Habitats and Species	11
B. Focal Counties	13
C. Outcomes	14
D. Partner Contribution Statement Format	15

GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction

The Northern Great Plains Joint Venture (NGPJV) is a diverse, self-directed partnership that works across portions of four states to deliver strategic habitat conservation for migratory birds and other priority wildlife. We bring people and organizations together to leverage technical and financial resources, building our collective capacity to achieve conservation at meaningful scales. We do this with a commitment to sustainable, natural and human communities.

The NGPJV is committed to:

1. Biological planning and conservation design (determining what needs to be done, and where, to maintain bird populations at desired levels);
2. Habitat delivery (assisting our partners with on-the-ground habitat conservation); and
3. Monitoring, evaluation, and applied research (testing assumptions; monitoring and evaluating effectiveness and response to management; and providing feedback to better inform future efforts).

For 2019, the NGPJV has funding available specifically to implement conservation for Watch List grassland bird species identified in the 2016 PIF Landbird Conservation Plan, through a new **Northern Grasslands Restoration Incentives (N-GRIP) Program**.

Intent of the Program

The intent of the N-GRIP Grants program is to accelerate delivery or improve the effectiveness of conservation program and practices, to support sustainable habitats and declining grassland bird populations within the boundaries of the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture. Successful grants are meant to deliver projects contributing measurably to the protection, restoration or enhancement of prairie grassland and/or shrub-steppe habitats used by one or more of the following five species: Baird's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Lark Bunting, McCown's Longspur, and Sprague's Pipit. We have identified priority counties for habitat delivery (see Appendix B. We strongly suggest that you contact the NGPJV Coordinator before 10 June, to discuss your project before beginning to develop a proposal. We will provide feedback, answer questions, and make suggestions for making the proposal stronger. Contact Daniel Casey at dcasey@ducks.org, 406-702-1944 (office); 406-270-5941 (mobile).

Funding Availability

We are making up to \$145,000 available for N-GRIP grants in our 2019 cycle. Funding is supported by grants from ConocoPhillips, Inc. and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, in addition to discretionary funds provided by the entities on the NGPJV Management Board. The maximum grant award per proposal is \$30,000. Habitat projects must be completed by June 2020 to qualify.

Projects initiated prior to 2019 can qualify for funding, but only if additional project activities are scheduled to be completed in 2019. All projects will need to document compliance applicable to federal regulations (e.g., NEPA)

Who Should Apply

Applications will be considered from a broad range of entities, but grant agreements will be most easily facilitated with 501(c)3 non-profit organizations and government agencies. If your group is unincorporated, please contact the NGPJV for guidance on acquiring a fiscal sponsor or agent. We strongly encourage applicants to coordinate their efforts with their local NRCS offices.

Grant Agreement

Successful grantees will be required to execute a grant agreement. Funding will be granted to your organization based on the terms and conditions defined in the grant agreement, which will reference the grant proposal as the scope of work for the project. In the event the grantee identifies a need to make substantial changes with respect to the timeline, scope, or purpose of the project, after notification of the grant award and before execution of the grant agreement, the grantee may be asked to withdraw their proposal and re-apply for funding at a future time.

Conservation grant funds provided through this process must be expended within the period of performance identified in the grant agreement. The period of performance will be 2019-2020, but may be extended upon mutual agreement of the grantee and NGPJV.

Reporting Requirements

The grant agreement requires submission of an Interim (typically 6-mo.) Progress Report and a Final Report. Report deadlines and payment schedules will be stipulated in the grant agreement; all invoices will be on a cost reimbursement basis. Twenty percent of the grant award will be withheld until the Final Report is submitted. Failure to submit reports as stipulated in the grant agreement may result in delayed payments or loss of funding.

Timeline

The following provides an overview of the timing of the 2019 N-GRIP Grants Cycle:

- A Request for Proposals (RFP) will be issued by the NGPJV on 3 May 2019.
- Proposals must be submitted by 28 June 2019, to be considered in the current cycle.
- The NGPJV staff and Conservation Grants Committee will review and rank proposals, and will present funding recommendations to the NGPJV Management Board by 19 July, 2019.
- The NGPJV Management Board will make funding decisions via conference call no later than 2 August 2019.
- The NGPJV will notify applicants of funding decisions by 9 August 2019.
- Grant agreements will be developed no later than 1 Sept 2019.

Project proponents are encouraged to contact the NGPJV Coordinator early in the process of proposal preparation (no later than 10 June 2019) with any questions regarding the eligibility of project activities. Daniel Casey dcasey@ducks.org 406-270-5941

REQUIRED PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

Eligible Proposals

The critical question to be addressed by Conservation Grants Program applicants is as follows: ***How will the proposal accelerate delivery or improve the effectiveness of conservation program and practices, to support sustainable populations of PIF Watch List grassland birds in the Northern Great Plains?***

Actions that accelerate delivery or improve program effectiveness should emphasize specific habitat management actions that serve as catalysts or demonstrations for broader application. Proposed projects will be evaluated using Technical Scoring Criteria (see pages 6-8).

The NGPJV is seeking projects that emphasize on-the-ground implementation. Our primary interest is to fund habitat projects, with an emphasis on those that serve as a catalyst for broader application, by providing a crucial element in a larger habitat project, demonstrating innovative approaches, or engaging a partner or partners that will implement similar measures more broadly. Only projects that result in measurable habitat improvements will be considered for funding. Projects may also include the following, but only as elements of projects that also include habitat management efforts:

- Communications and outreach (e.g., websites, brochures, landowner visits, tours, etc.) directly linked to prairie ecosystem conservation.
- Training, workshops or demonstration area projects that target private landowners and directly impact the partnership's ability to transfer and deliver grassland, shrub-steppe, wetland or riparian habitat conservation.
- Effectiveness monitoring to assess species response to management.

Ineligible Proposals

The following projects are ineligible for funding:

- Staff position support (May be included as match, cash or in-kind).
- Certain activities associated with on-the-ground habitat projects, including but not limited to site-specific National Environmental Policy Act or archaeological clearance support, permitting, engineering or design, construction materials, labor, or equipment (such categories may be included as match for N-GRIP).
- Lobbying efforts or endowments.
- Research or broad scale monitoring efforts.

Partnerships

Partners are defined as those who contribute tangibly toward a conservation grant project, either in direct cash or in-kind services to establish capacity, or through habitat project funding. Partnerships should be broadly based, with a diversity of partner categories. A mix of state and federal agencies, non-governmental conservation organizations, and other conservation groups working toward focused habitat conservation delivery is considered optimal.

Fund Leveraging

One goal of the NGPJV N-GRIP Grants is to accelerate rangeland conservation delivery through empowering partnerships to acquire and utilize funding that might otherwise be unobtainable. There is no bottom line “match” requirement or cost-share obligation to receive an N-GRIP Grant. Nevertheless, funding leveraged by these grants does increase their value to the bird habitat conservation enterprise in the NGPJV geography, and all other things being equal, projects with higher leverage will be strongly favored. The NGPJV defines leverage as:

- **Capacity Fund Leveraging:** The direct cash or in-kind services committed by other partners to project capacity.
- **Habitat Project Fund Leveraging:** Additional funds devoted or likely to be devoted to habitat conservation projects as a result of the grant. The habitat project fund leveraging should be estimated in the context of being above “baseline” or standard allocations for bird habitat conservation in the project area.

Projects that complement or directly facilitate grassland conservation delivery through the new [Northern Prairies Grasslands Working Lands for Wildlife \(WLFW\)](#) effort in South Dakota or North Dakota will be given preference.

Technical Scoring Criteria and Point Values

The development of scores is meant to serve as a tool for the objective consideration of proposals by individuals on the NGPJV Grants Committee, which is comprised of a subset of Technical Committee and Management Board members. The scores will be tallied and ranked for presentation to the NGPJV Management Board, along with recommendations for funding. The Board will be solely responsible for deciding which proposal(s) to fund; scores provide objective guidance, but don’t necessarily dictate final decisions by the Board. Board members will recuse themselves when proposals from the organization they represent are being reviewed.

A. Delivers Bird Habitat Conservation:

Maximum 25 points

- Is the project located in one or more of our highest priority counties?
- How, specifically, will the project support prairie habitat conservation actions?
- How many acres of grassland habitat will be restored or enhanced through improved management or protected?

- Describe the anticipated benefits to one or more of our primary NGPJV priority habitats (grasslands, sagebrush steppe) and emphasize how specific actions undertaken will improve habitat condition, sustainability, and or ecological services (e.g., soil health, water quality or quantity).
- Describe the anticipated benefits to our five targeted NGPJV PIF Watch List/declining bird species (see Appendix A). Focus on one or more species that the project will substantially benefit, in contrast to those species that are casual or accidental in occurrence.
- Describe how the habitat project(s), if any, offer innovation that will catalyze additional action or serve as a demonstration for broader application.
- Describe how the project will measure success in terms of conservation outcomes. Please refer to Appendix C for a list of specific conservation outcomes.

B. Catalyzes Partnerships:

Maximum 10 points

- Provide a list of project partners as well as their roles and commitments to this project.
- Define any unique or special aspects of the partnership (e.g. diversity, scope, scale) that will contribute to the long-term success of the project.
- How will the project strengthen the NGPJV’s broader partnership efforts to implement bird habitat conservation? Consider any potential opportunities for information or project transfer to a larger NGPJV constituency.
- How much direct funding (“capacity fund leveraging”) is committed by other partners to the project?
- How much habitat conservation project funding (“habitat project fund leveraging”) will be leveraged by partners?

C. Strengthens/Maintains Capacity:

Maximum 5 points

- How will the proposed project impact your organization’s continued ability to deliver bird habitat conservation in the Northern Great Plains?
- How will the funding help achieve strategic bird conservation goals and objectives that would not happen otherwise?

D. Integration

Maximum 5 points

- How will the project outcomes promote or refine conservation actions for priority habitats and bird species?
- Describe linkages to existing conservation partnership and producer networks and any anticipated outreach during and following project implementation project.
- Describe how evaluation data will be disseminated to habitat delivery partners or practitioners and applied to future on-the-ground conservation actions.

E. Special Circumstances

Maximum 5 points

- Describe any special project circumstances not articulated above (e.g. significance of landscape, transferability, capitalizing on timing of funding or initiatives (particularly WLFW) innovative conservation approaches, unique outcomes, enduring solutions, ability to produce measurable outcomes, etc.).

PROPOSAL FORMAT AND SUBMISSION

Applicants are required to follow the format below. Maximum page limit is six pages, excluding the project map, partner contribution statements, letters of support, and photos. Please use 11 or 12 point font.

Cover Page (1 page)

NGPJV 2019 Northern Grassland Restoration Incentives (N-GRIP) Grants Program

Date Submitted: _____ Amount Requested: _____

Project Title: _____

Project County(ies): (See Appendix B) _____

Project State(s): _____

Organization: _____

Contact Address: _____

Contact Person: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Project Type: (Grassland Protection, Restoration, Enhancement) _____

Brief Description of Project Purpose and Goals (**125 words maximum**):

General Project Description (2 pages maximum)

1. Clearly state the context and need for the project, particularly how it will translate to on-the-ground habitat conservation achievements. Include:
 - a. Why the project is needed at this time;
 - b. Who will be engaged in and by project activities;
 - c. Where the primary project activities will take place;
 - d. Target audience for project activities and products.
2. Identify the purpose, goals and objectives of the project. (Objectives expressed in quantitative terms will result in a higher rating.) Identify, for example:

- a. How many partners will be actively engaged (e.g. producers, practitioners);
 - b. How many acres of what priority habitats do you hope to influence;
 - c. Which PIF Watch List species you expect to benefit (Appendix A);
3. Describe the project activities, the duration of the project and expected results. Results should be quantitative to the degree possible, e.g.:
- a. Number of primary (grassland, shrub-steppe), and secondary (wetland or riparian habitat) acres protected, enhanced or restored;
 - b. Priority species expected to benefit (see Appendix A);
 - c. Number of increased pairs or individuals of priority bird species (when feasible);
 - d. Resource issues addressed; and/or
 - e. Target audiences reached.
4. Include a timetable for accomplishment of grant activities and who will be responsible for completing the work. If this request is for part of an ongoing or newly initiated longer-term effort, explain the context and overall project timeline.

Specific Project Criteria (2 pages maximum)

Please address, in narrative form, how your project meets or does not meet each of the following Technical Scoring Criteria and the sub-elements listed under each in the **Technical Scoring Criteria and Point Values** section above:

- A. Delivers Habitat Conservation
- B. Catalyzes Partnerships
- C. Strengthens /Maintains Capacity
- D. Integration
- E. Special Circumstances

Budget Tables

Please provide detailed information the costs of habitat conservation activities, and on matching capacity/planning/outreach funding leveraged by partners (see Appendix C for definitions of outcomes).

Total funds requested cannot exceed \$30,000 per project, with no more than 10% of the requested amount applied to overhead or administrative charges. Costs incurred prior to grant award are eligible to include as match, if they are directly tied to activities undertaken in 2019, during the period of the award agreement.

Table A. Habitat conservation funding (Funding Assistance) leverage (add lines as needed)

Project Detail:						
Activities	NGPJV N-GRIP Request (\$)	Non-Federal Partner (name)	Non- Federal Partner (\$)	Federal Partner (name)	Federal Partner (\$)	Total \$\$
Total Habitat Funds Leveraged						

Table B. Capacity or other match (including planning, technical assistance, science support, outreach funding leverage (add lines as needed).

Activities	Non-Federal Partner (name)	Non-Federal Partner (\$)	Federal Partner (name)	Federal Partner (\$)	Total \$\$
Total Capacity Funds Leveraged					

Project Map, Partner Contribution Statements, Letters of Support and Photos

- A project map is required and should include the project title and location of the entire project area.
- Partner contribution statements are required from all partners contributing project funding, excluding the organization submitting the request (see Appendix D for preferred format).
- Letters of support can also be submitted. There is not a required number of letters, but enough should be provided to demonstrate partner and/or general support of the project.
- Photos are optional.

Proposal Submission

Applicants must submit an electronic copy and a single hard copy by mail, postmarked by 28 June, 2019.

- The electronic version of the proposal must be saved into one Microsoft Word or PDF file.
- Maximum electronic file size is 5MB.
- File name should read as follows: Applicant_ProposalTitle_NGRIP_2019.
- Please email the proposal to the NGPJV at abartosngpjb@gmail.com
- Mail a single hard copy to the NGPJV, 3302 4th Ave. N., Suite 120, Billings, MT 59101

Appendix A - Priority habitats and bird species, NGPJV

Priority Habitats:

PRIMARY: These habitats must be the primary focus of your habitat conservation project(s).

- **Grassland:** Especially native mixed-grass prairie, dominated by wheatgrasses, needlegrasses, prairie sandreed, blue grama, and/or buffalograss.
- **Sagebrush Steppe:** Especially sites dominated by grassland elements, interspersed with big sage, silver sage, greasewood and/or saltbush.

SECONDARY: (If present in your project area, describe effects to these habitats in the context of your proposal).

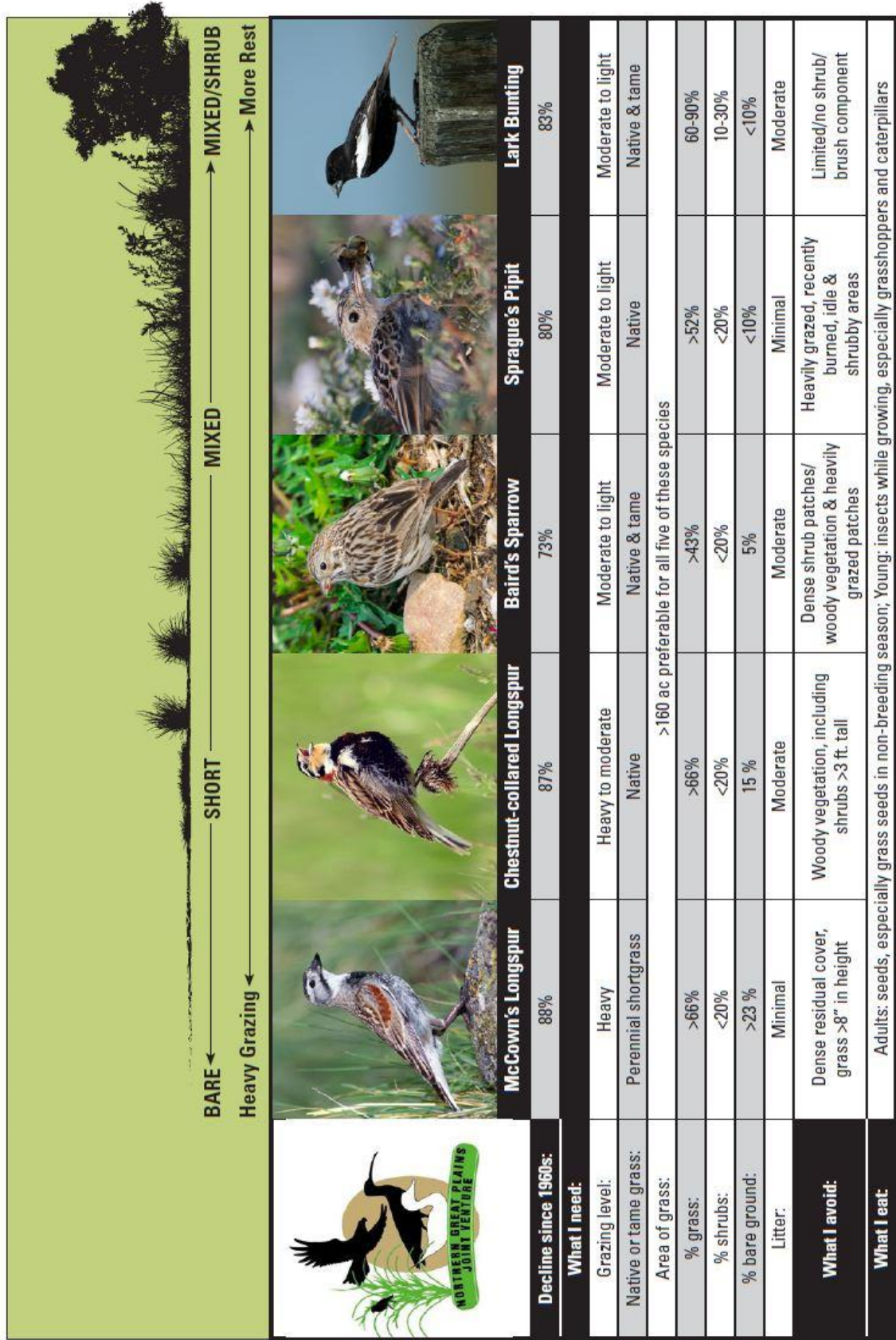
- **Wetlands:** Riverine channels and off-channel sloughs; ephemeral prairie wetlands dominated by sedges; marshes and pothole lakes; reservoirs; playas.
- **Riparian:** Cottonwood gallery forests, riparian shrublands, woody draws.

Priority Bird Species:

Our **2019 N-GRIP** Grants are designed to target habitat conservation efforts for four grassland dependent landbirds listed in the 2016 PIF Implementation Plan Watch List (Baird's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, McCown's Longspur, Sprague's Pipit), and one additional species, the Lark Bunting, which is a common species in steep decline. The following page summarizes the habitat needs and response to management in these five species, respectively.

Our science team has also prioritized the 68 counties of the NGPJV based on their relative importance to one or more of these species, using species distribution model outputs developed by the USFWS Habitat and Populations Evaluation Team (HAPET) office in Bismarck, ND. Priority counties (Appendix B) were ranked based on the number, abundance and overlap of these priority bird species.

GRASSLAND BIRDS & HABITAT REQUIREMENTS



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APPENDIX B – Focal Counties

The following table ranks NGPJV counties based on their relative importance to the five landbird species that are the current focus of our conservation delivery efforts. Though we support conservation throughout the region, we will give preference to projects in the following priority counties for the use of these N-GRIP funds obligated in 2019.

Highest Priority:

South Dakota:

Harding, Butte, Perkins, Corson, Meade

North Dakota:

Bowman, Grant, Morton, Sioux

Montana:

Judith Basin, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Wheatland, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Cascade, Petroleum

Wyoming:

Crook, Niobrara, Campbell

Moderate Priority:

South Dakota:

Shannon, Ziebach, Fall River, Haakon, Stanley

North Dakota:

Billings, Oliver, Dunn, Adams, Stark, Slope, Golden Valley, Hettinger

Montana:

Chouteau, Fergus, Prairie, Rosebud, Dawson, McCone

Wyoming:

Converse, Weston

APPENDIX C – Outcomes (Definitions)

Protected: Acres acquired by fee title or long-term (e.g. 30 yr, perpetual) conservation easement. Note that the development of long-term management agreements or contracts may also be considered a step toward long-term protection.

Restored: Acres returned to natural/historic structure or functions through manipulation of physical, chemical and/or biological characteristics of a site on which habitat has been degraded or converted. Examples include re-seeding cropland to (preferably native) grasses and forbs; reclamation of disturbed lands.

Enhanced: Acres with improved habitat conditions through manipulation of physical, chemical and/or biological characteristics of a site. Examples include improved grazing infrastructure (e.g. fencing, water infrastructure) or grazing systems; mowing or fire to manipulate structure or reduce litter buildup; interseeding to improve grass and forb diversity.

Desired/Potential Outcomes:

(anticipated quantity of each appropriate measure should be specified in proposals, and those achieved in project reports). Habitats are listed in priority order, with **grasslands** being our highest priority.

Total Acres Protected:

1. **Grassland**
2. **Shrub-steppe**
3. Wetlands
4. Riparian

Total Acres Restored

1. **Grassland**
2. **Shrub-steppe**
3. Wetlands
4. Riparian

Total Acres Enhanced

1. **Grassland**
2. **Shrub-steppe**
3. Wetland
4. Riparian

- Conservation Easements Acquired
- Conservation Plans/Contracts Developed
- Landowner Visits
- Partnering Organizations Involved
- Meetings/Work Groups Facilitated
- Field Tours Hosted
- Management Effects Evaluated
- Other (be specific)

APPENDIX D-Partner Contribution Statement Format

Contribution statements are required for all partner contributions to conservation grant funding (Table A). Please submit the following information on the partner's formal letterhead:

NGPJV Capacity Grants Program – Partner Contribution Statement

Date:

Name (printed), Title, Organization:

Title of the proposal you are contributing to:

What is the amount of your contribution to the capacity grant?

When will you make the contribution?

Please briefly describe why you are contributing to the project:

Do you have any additional comments?

Signature: