

307.30 Prairie Pothole Wetland and Grassland Retention Project

Project Name and Acronym: Prairie Pothole Wetland and Grassland Retention Project (PPWGRP)

Project Description/Summary

The PPWGRP provides dedicated Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds to assist producers in approved States to implement conservation practices specifically targeted to encourage the retention of wetlands and grasslands in the Prairie Pothole Region, improve wildlife habitat for migratory birds, improve water quality and quantity, improving grassland health, and reduce soil erosion and sediment.

PPWGRP is governed by a board of directors, chaired by the Regional Conservationists (RCs) and composed of the State Conservationists (STCs) of included States. Adoption and modification of this guidance must be reviewed and approved through the board of directors, assisted by the initiative coordinator.

Approved or Participating States

States participating in PPWGRP are Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. State Conservationists (STCs) will allocate PPWGRP funds only within the Prairie Pothole Region boundary as shown in map A of this appendix.

Allocation Guidance

Participation in PPWGRP requires a contribution of EQIP general State funding for use in the project. STCs must make a matching contribution from their general EQIP funds in addition to the amount provided through the allocation letter provided by NHQ. States must submit this contribution as an allowance change through the Allowance Change Tool (ACT).

Program Contact Information

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ProTracts Requirements

1. **Subaccount Guidance**
STCs will select the “PPWGRP” account type in ProTracts for subaccounts associated with this initiative. The subaccounts must be assigned the name of “PPWGRP - *(project or local name if applicable)*” to facilitate monitoring of data in ProTracts.

2. **Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT) Guidance – Choice Lists and Matrix Data**
 - **Approved Land Types to be Populated in ProTracts AERT**
States must assign the following land uses as eligible for this project. (Other land uses are not authorized for PPWGRP.)

Required Land Use
Crop
Range
Pasture
Associated Agriculture Lands

- **Approved Natural Resource Concerns to be Populated in ProTracts AERT**
States must assign the following natural resource concerns for this project. (Other resource concerns are not authorized for PPWGRP.)

Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health
Degraded Plant Condition – Inadequate Structure and Composition
Degraded Plant Condition – Excessive Plant Pest Pressure
Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat – Food
Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat – Cover/Shelter
Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat – Habitat Continuity (Space)

Water Quality Degradation – Nutrients in Surface water
Water Quality Degradation – Excessive Sediment in Surface Water
Excess Water – Runoff, Flooding, or Ponding
Excess Water – Seasonal High Water Table

Note: No additional resource concerns may be added or used in ProTracts AERT to support this project.

- **Approved Conservation Practices to be Populated in ProTracts AERT**

Contracts developed under PPWGRP must include at least one of the applicable core practices, or must complete a conservation system that supports core practices that are documented as already implemented on the land proposed for the PPWGRP application.

Core Practices	
Practice Name	Practice Code
Forage and Biomass Planting	512
Prescribed Grazing	528
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	644
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	645

Supporting Practices That States May Offer to Support This Project

Supporting Practices	
Practice Name	Practice Code
Herbaceous Weed Control	315
Conservation Cover	327
Conservation Crop Rotation	328
Prescribed Burning	338
Cover Crop	340
Critical Area Planting	342
Pond	378
Fence	382
Firebreak	394
Grade Stabilization Structure	410
Access Control	472
Obstruction Removal	500
Forage Harvest Management	511
Livestock Pipeline	516
Pumping Plant	533
Range Planting	550
Heavy Use Area Protection	561
Spring Development	574
Stream Crossing	578
Nutrient Management	590
Watering Facility	614
Underground Outlet	620
Water Well	642
Structures for Wildlife	649
Wetland Restoration	657

Note: The use of cover crop (Practice Code 340) in cropland systems is the only instance where a supporting practice may be used without an associated core practice. All other contracts developed under the project must include at least one of the applicable core practices or must support core practices documented as already implemented on the land units under contract.

Conservation Activity Plans That States May Offer to Support This Project

Conservation Activity Plans

Practice Name	Practice Code
Grazing Management Plan	110
Prescribed Burning Plan	112
Fish & Wildlife Habitat Plan	142
Pollinator Habitat Plan	146

- STCs may request waivers allowing financial assistance payments of more than 3 years for the management practices 511 Forage Harvest Management, 528 Prescribed Grazing, 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management and 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management to realize the full potential of the practice and to reach desired quality criteria.
- **AERT Practice-Resource Concern Matrix**

States will populate the approved conservation practices in the ProTracts AERT and associate all core and supporting practices with resource concerns where CPPE values are positive.

3. AERT Guidance – Ranking Criteria Questions

The total ranking points associated with the project are distributed in AERT and approved ranking questions are as follows:

AERT Level	Maximum Points	Point Percentage
National Ranking Questions	250	25%
State Ranking Questions	400	40%
Local Ranking Questions	250	25%
Efficiency Score	100	10%
Total points for this initiative:	1,000	100%

The following are detailed instructions for populating ranking questions and points in ProTracts AERT.

National Ranking Criteria Requirements

National ranking questions are established in ProTracts by National Headquarters.

State Ranking Criteria Requirements

State ranking questions are established by the board of directors and entered into ProTracts by States.

To support this project, States must enter all the following State-level questions and points in ProTracts AERT for each approved subaccount.

Question Number	Question	Points
1	The program application to support the development of a conservation activity plan (CAP)? If answer is "Yes" do not answer any other State level questions. If answer is "No" proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section.	400
2	Will the offered acres include expired (within the last 2 years) or expiring (this calendar year) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres that will be maintained, enhanced, and or established as wetlands or grasslands?	100
3	Will the offered acres include existing wetland and grassland that will be retained and have grazing and wildlife management practices scheduled on them?	50
4	Will the offered acres include annually cropped acres that will be restored to wetlands, grasslands, and/or perennial forage?	50
5	Will the offered acres include cropland on which the producer agrees to modify an existing crop rotation comprised of corn and soybeans to include pollinator-friendly crops, fall seeded small grains to comprise a	20

	minimum of 50% of the crop rotation, or changing the crop rotation to include perennial grass or legumes in the crop rotation?	
6	Will the offered acres include cropland acres that will be used as part of a prescribed grazing system that utilizes the grazing of crop stubble or cover crops?	25
7	Will the treatment you intend to implement result in wetlands being created, restored or enhanced?	35
8	Is the application located within a subregion based on "USFWS Waterfowl Breeding Pairs Maps" that has more than 25 breeding duck pairs per square mile and will provide benefits to priority migratory bird species of concern (waterfowl and/or grassland birds)?	50
9	Are the offered acres of land predominately of Land Capability Class (LCC) I-IV that are currently in grassland and at risk of conversion to cropland?	20
10	Will the offered cropland acres include implementing the 340 cover crop practice to address wildlife habitat - food?	20
11	The application includes conservation practices that will have a positive effect on Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health (i.e., 327 Conservation Cover, 512 Forage and Biomass Planting, 528 Prescribed Grazing)	30
	Total Points	400

Local-Level Ranking Criteria Requirements

Local ranking questions are approved and entered into ProTracts at the State level.

Screening Criteria

Applications within the PPWGRP will be screened and assigned **High**, **Medium**, or **Low** priority status in ProTracts based on the State-specific criteria below as captured on "NATIONAL SCREENING CRITERIA WORKSHEET" on the following page. High priority applications must be ranked and approved for funding before any medium priority application are ranked or funded. Low priority applications will not be ranked or funded without written approval of the Regional Conservationist.

**NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
Prairie Pothole Wetland and Grassland Retention Project (PPWGRP)
NATIONAL SCREENING CRITERIA WORKSHEET**

A screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible EQIP application.

Instructions:

This screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible producer applying for EQIP Prairie Pothole Wetland and Grassland Retention Project assistance. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis; however, application periods are established for purposes of evaluation, ranking, and funding decisions.

Completion of this worksheet and documentation does not constitute agreement to provide EQIP program benefits or approval of a program contract. The original screening worksheet should be filed with the applicant case file or EQIP program file and unless the application is determined to be ineligible, the screening priority (high, medium, and low) must be recorded in ProTracts application priority. Upon request, a copy of any completed screening worksheet may be provided to the applicant.

Detailed Screening Criteria Worksheet – Complete for Each Eligible EQIP Applicant

Applicant Name:		County:	
Application No: (OPTIONAL)		Field Office:	
Evaluator Name:		Date:	

Priority Determination for ProTracts – Select One:

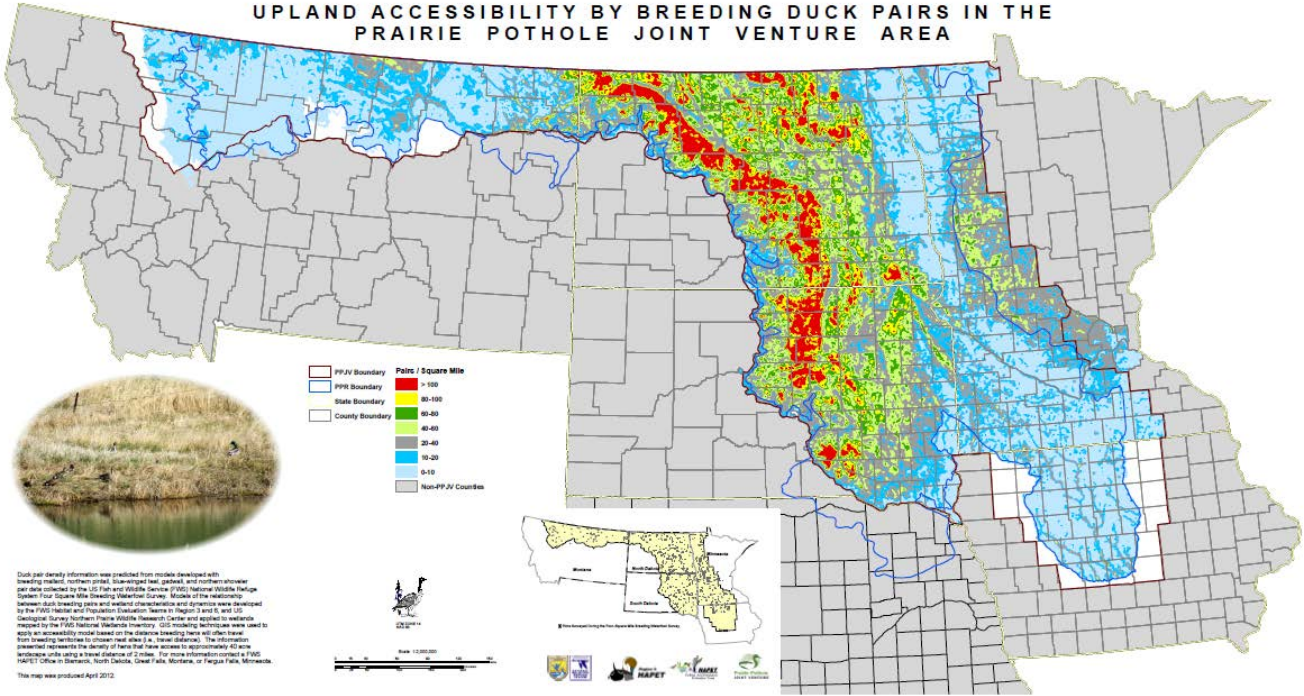
<p><u>High Priority Category:</u> The application is for a Grazing Management Plan (110), Prescribed Burning Plan (112), Fish & Wildlife Habitat Plan (142), or a Pollinator Habitat Plan (146). Or The application includes at least one core conservation practice (511, 512, 528, 644, 645) that will maintain or restore grassland in the Prairie Pothole Region.</p>	<p>High Priority Status in ProTracts</p>
<p><u>Medium Priority Category:</u> The application includes 0 core conservation practices but does include at least one supporting conservation practice that will be completing a system that supports an existing core practice plus at least one of the following situations to mitigate the loss of grassland and wildlife habitat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer area has at least 25 breeding pairs per square mile (map upland accessibility by breeding duck pairs in the Prairie Pothole Region). • Treated acres are within 1 mile of a protected wetland or grassland area or within 1 mile of an existing CRP wetland. <p>Or The use of practice Cover Crop (340) with winter hardy species in a cropping system may be used without an associated core practice.</p>	<p>Medium Priority Status in ProTracts</p>
<p><u>Low Priority Category:</u> Low priority applications <u>will not be ranked.</u> All other applications</p>	<p>Low Priority Status in ProTracts</p>

The priority determination of high, medium, or low must be recorded in ProTracts application priority this applicant.

D.C. Approval:		Date Approved:	
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Map A: Map of PPWGRP Area

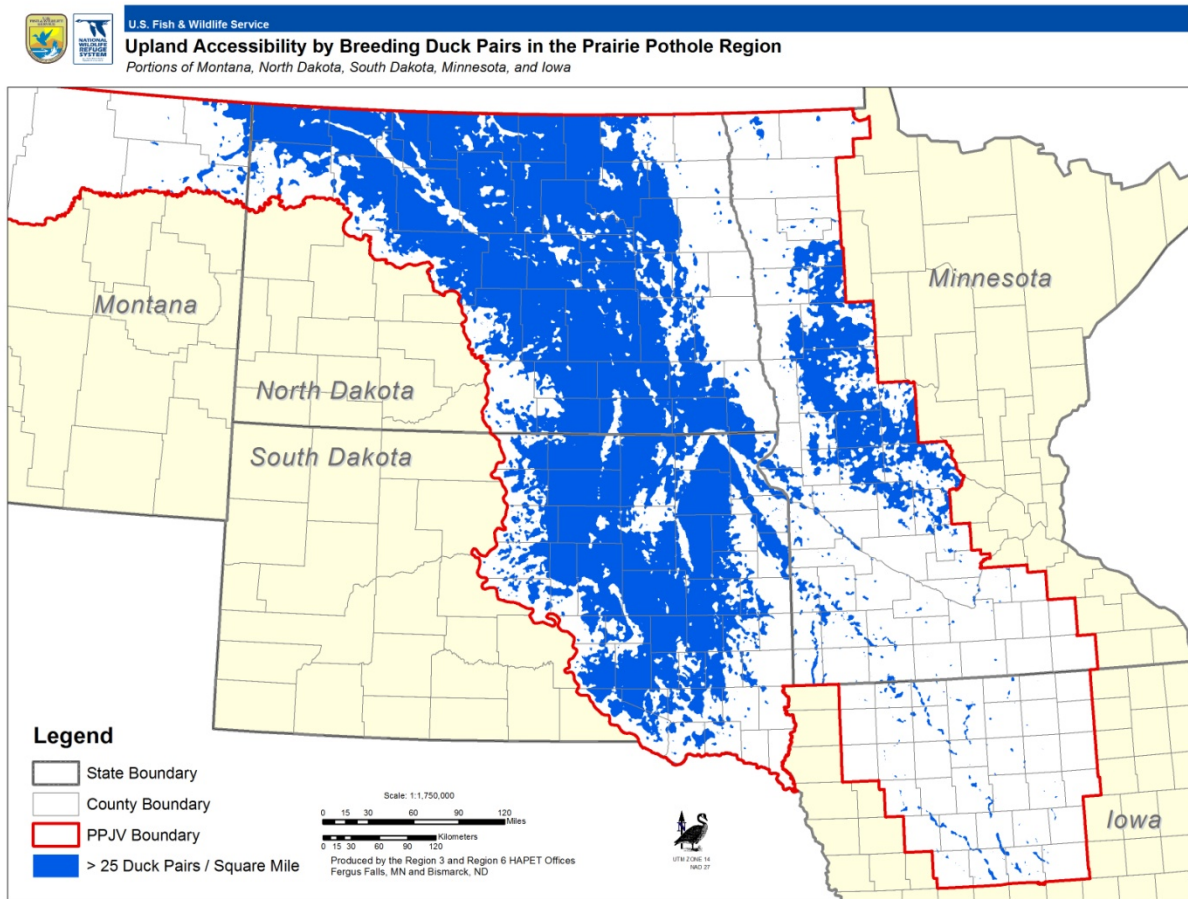
UPLAND ACCESSIBILITY BY BREEDING DUCK PAIRS IN THE PRAIRIE POTHOLE JOINT VENTURE AREA



Duck pair density information was produced from models developed with breeding mallard, northern pintail, blue-winged teal, gadwall, and northern shoveler pair data collected by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wildlife Refuge System Four Square Mile Breeding Waterbird Survey. Models of the relationship between duck breeding pairs and habitat characteristics and densities were developed by the FWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Teams in Region 3 and 5, and USFWS Geospatial Survey Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center and applied to wetlands mapped by the FWS National Wetlands Inventory. GIS modeling techniques were used to apply an accessibility model based on the distance breeding pairs will fly from their nesting territories (usually less than 10 km) to wetlands. The distribution presented represents the density of pairs that have access to approximately 40 km wetlands, with only a travel distance of 2 miles. For more information contact the FWS RAPET Office in Bismarck, North Dakota, Grand Forks, Minnesota, or Fargo, North Dakota.

This map was produced April 2012.

Map B: Map of 25 Breeding Duck Pairs Per Square Mile or Greater



Map provided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service