

Northern Great Plains Joint Venture

Partners In Flight Implementation Grants Program



2018 Funding Guidelines



20 December 2017

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

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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).

Activities are carried out in accordance with the goals and objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), the U. S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP), the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (NAWCP), the Partners In Flight (PIF) Landbird Conservation Plan, the NGPJV 2006 Implementation Plan, and the State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. For 2018, the NGPJV has funding available specifically to implement conservation for Watch List grassland bird species identified in the 2016 PIF Landbird Conservation Plan.

Intent of the Program

The intent of the NGPJV PIF Implementation 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 strongly suggest that you contact the NGPJV Coordinator before 10 January, 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

The maximum grant award per proposal is \$20,000. Habitat projects must be completed in 2018 to qualify.

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.

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 2018, 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 2018 PIF Implementation Grants Cycle:

- A Request for Proposals (RFP) will be issued by the NGPJV on 20 December 2017.
- Proposals must be submitted by 31 January 2018, 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 16 February, 2018.
- The NGPJV Management Board will make funding decisions via conference call no later than 28 February 2018.
- The NGPJV will notify applicants of funding decisions by 9 March 2018.
- Grant agreements will be developed no later than 1 April, 2018.

REQUIRED PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

Project proponents are encouraged to contact the NGPJV Coordinator early in the process of proposal preparation (no later than 10 January 2018) with any questions regarding the eligibility of project activities. Daniel Casey
dcasey@ducks.org 406-270-5941

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 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 6-7).

Given the limited funding available for 2018 implementation through this grant, 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. 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.
- 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 Conservation Grants).
- 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 PIF Implementation Grants is to accelerate 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 Implementation 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 considered more favorably. 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.

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 10 points

- How, specifically, will the project support prairie habitat conservation actions?
- 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. Will the project address limiting factors for the species and/or meet annual life cycle requirements?

- 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 conservation outcomes.

B. Catalyzes Partnerships:

Maximum 4 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 4 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 2 points

- Describe any special project circumstances not articulated above (e.g. significance of landscape, transferability, capitalizing on timing of funding or initiatives, 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 2018 PIF Implementation 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: (capacity, outreach, research, and/or habitat) _____

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 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 on capacity/planning/outreach funding leveraged by partners, in addition to the proposed total for habitat project funding leveraged (see Appendix C for definitions).

Total funds requested cannot exceed \$20,000, with no more than 10% of the requested amount applied to overhead or administrative charges.

Table A. Capacity (including planning, technical assistance, science support, outreach funding leverage).

Project Detail:						
	NGPJV Request (\$)	Non-Federal Partner (name)	Non-Federal Partner (\$)	Federal Partner (name)	Federal Partner (\$)	Total \$\$
Total Capacity Funds Leveraged						

Table B. Habitat Conservation funding (Funding Assistance) leverage

Project Detail:						
	NGPJV Request (\$)	Non-Federal Partner (name)	Non-Federal Partner (\$)	Federal Partner (name)	Federal Partner (\$)	Total \$\$
Total Habitat 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 31 January, 2018:

- 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_2018.
- Please email the proposal to Dan Casey at dcasey@ducks.org
- 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 should be the primary focus of your project.

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

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.

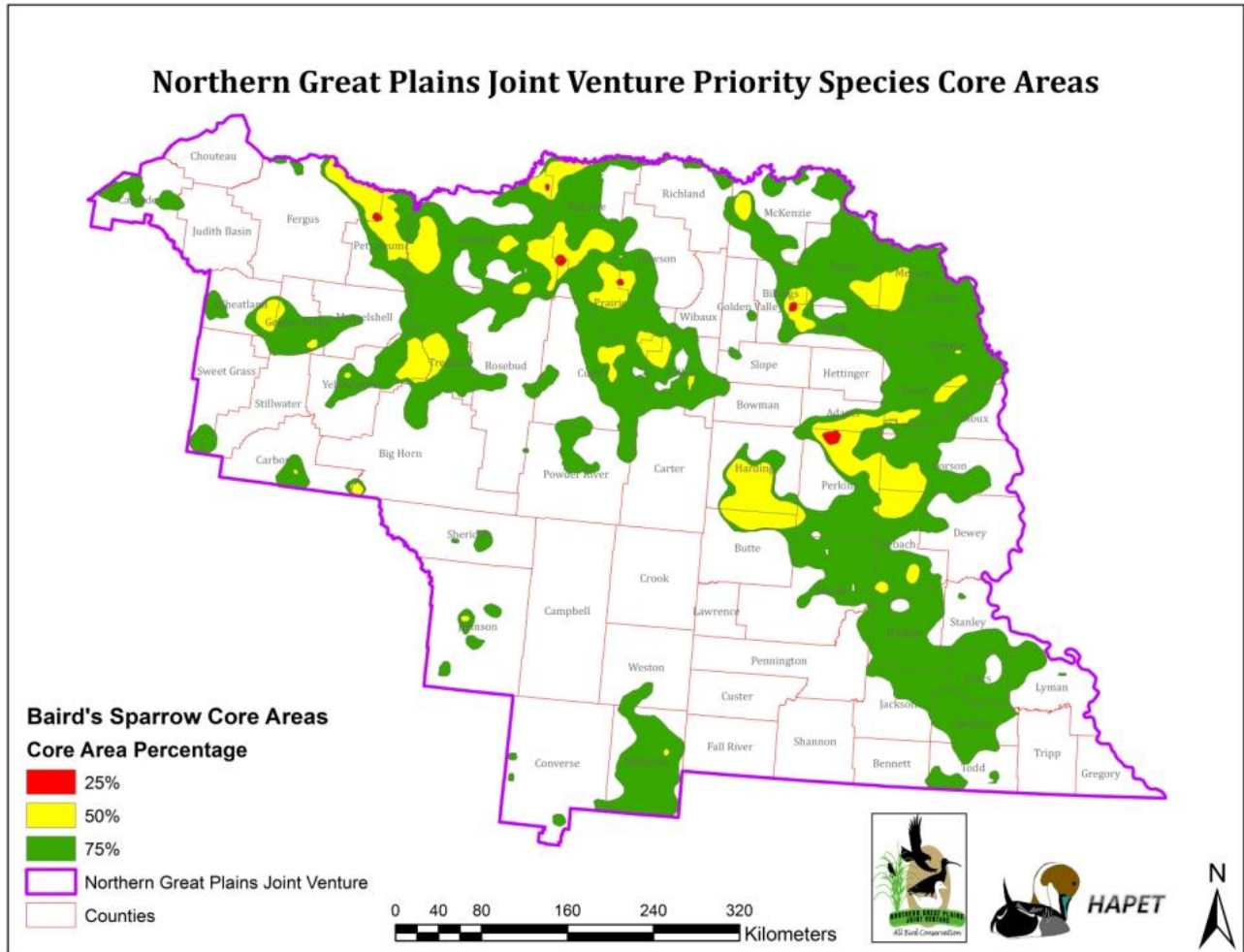
Priority Bird Species:

Our 2018 PIF Implementation 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 pages briefly summarize the habitat needs and response to management in these five species, respectively.

Our NGPJV science team has also identified core areas for each of these five species, and areas of overlap. Please review these maps. Projects in those counties with one or more overlapping core areas will be strongly preferred (see also Appendix B).

Baird's Sparrow

- Idle or lightly- to moderately-grazed pastures
- Moderately deep litter, vegetation 20-100 cm tall
- Native or tame; structure more important than species

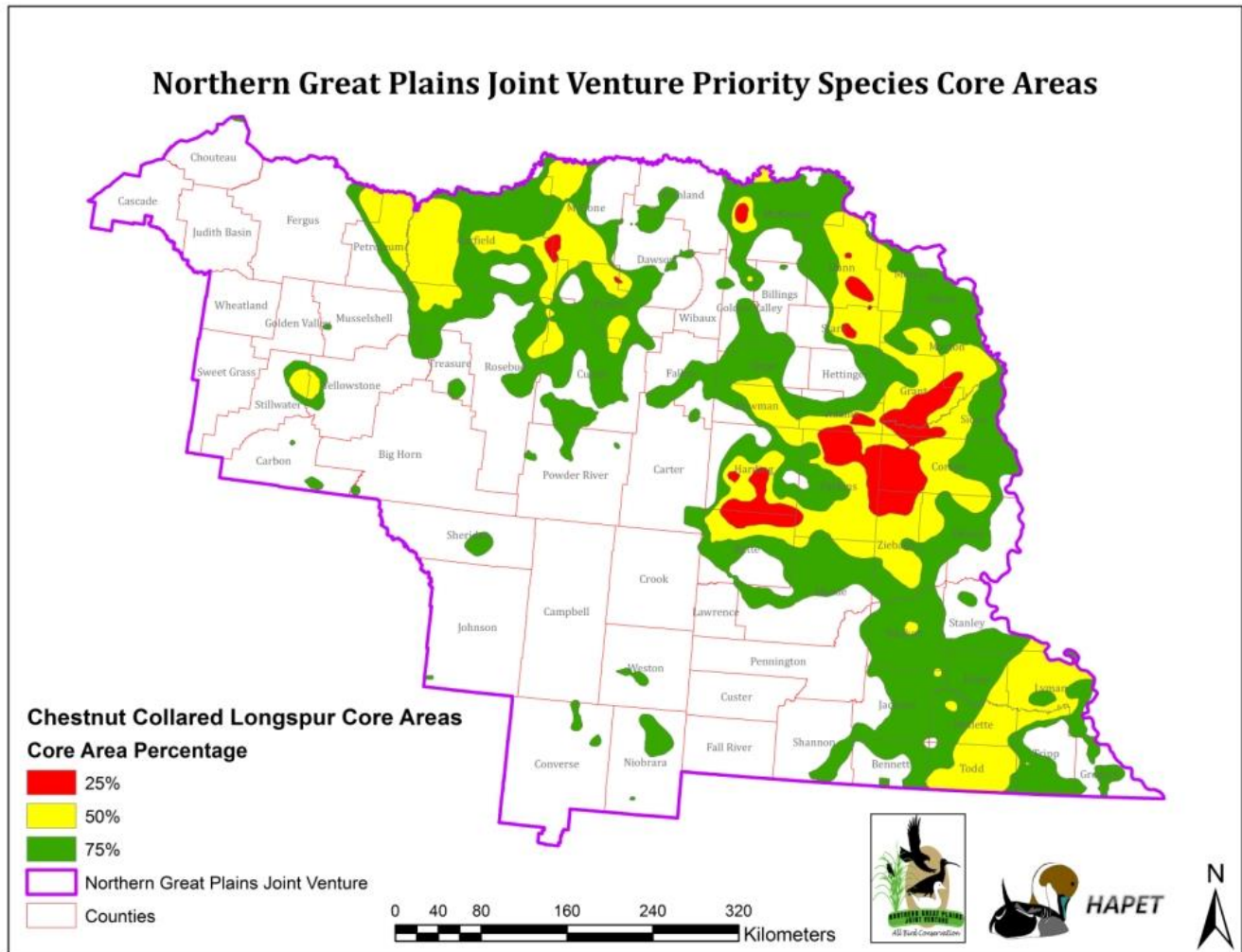


Management Recommendations (Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center):

- Provide a mosaic of relatively dense native grassland, with moderate litter, in large patches
- Prevent encroachment by woody vegetation
- Limit heavy grazing, especially during the summer
- Use patchy fire to maintain heterogeneity
- Delay mowing until late July or August

Chestnut-collared Longspur

- Level to rolling mixed-grass and shortgrass uplands
- Open prairie without excessive shrubs or dense litter

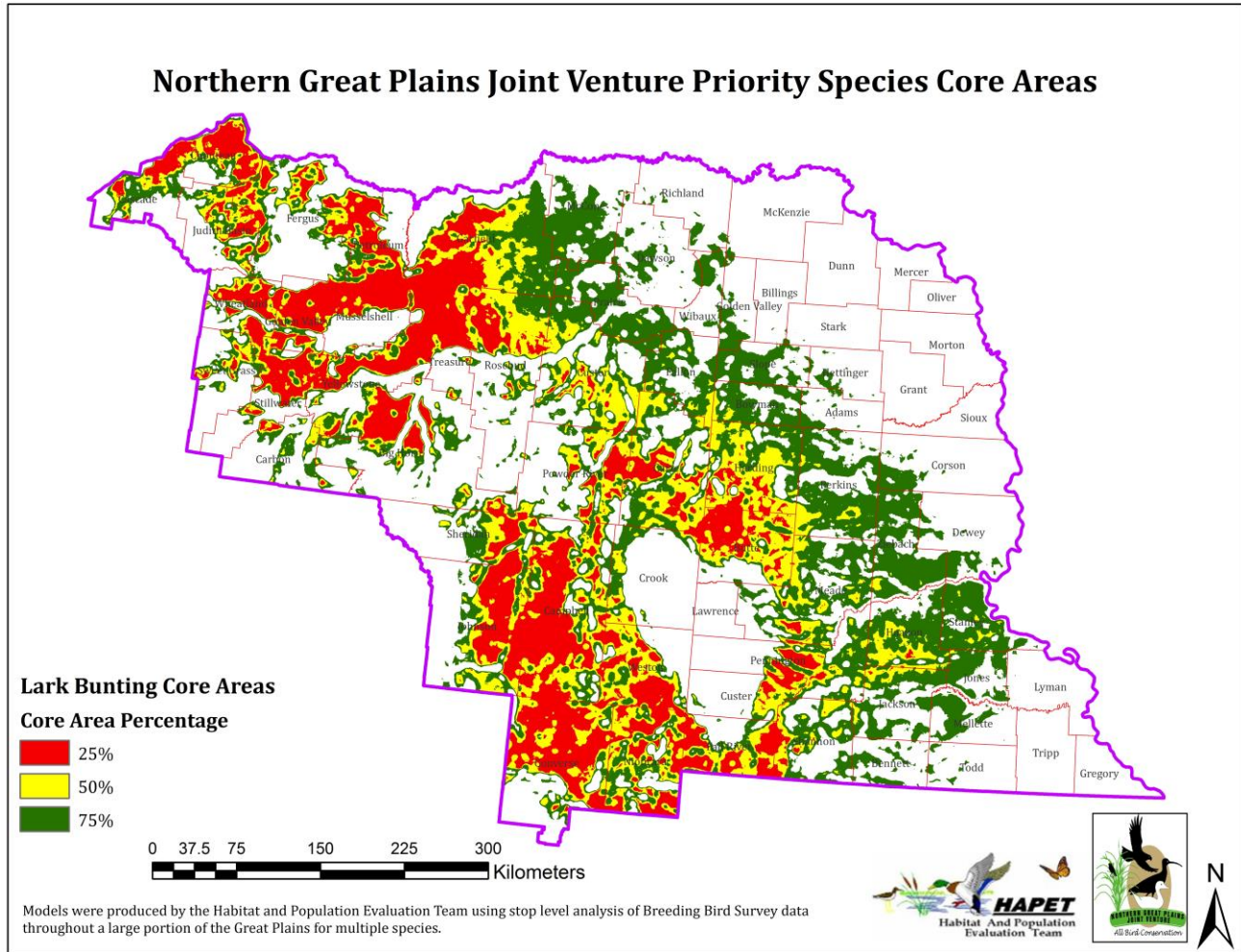


Management Recommendations (Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center):

- Protect prairie from cultivation
- Provide open, grazed native prairie
- Avoid managing for idle, dense vegetation
- Mowing can be used in mixed-grass prairie

Lark Bunting

- Low to moderate-height (< 60 cm) grasslands
- High (45%) vegetative cover, with shrubs
- Grassland, shrubsteppe, weedy fallow, CRP, alfalfa

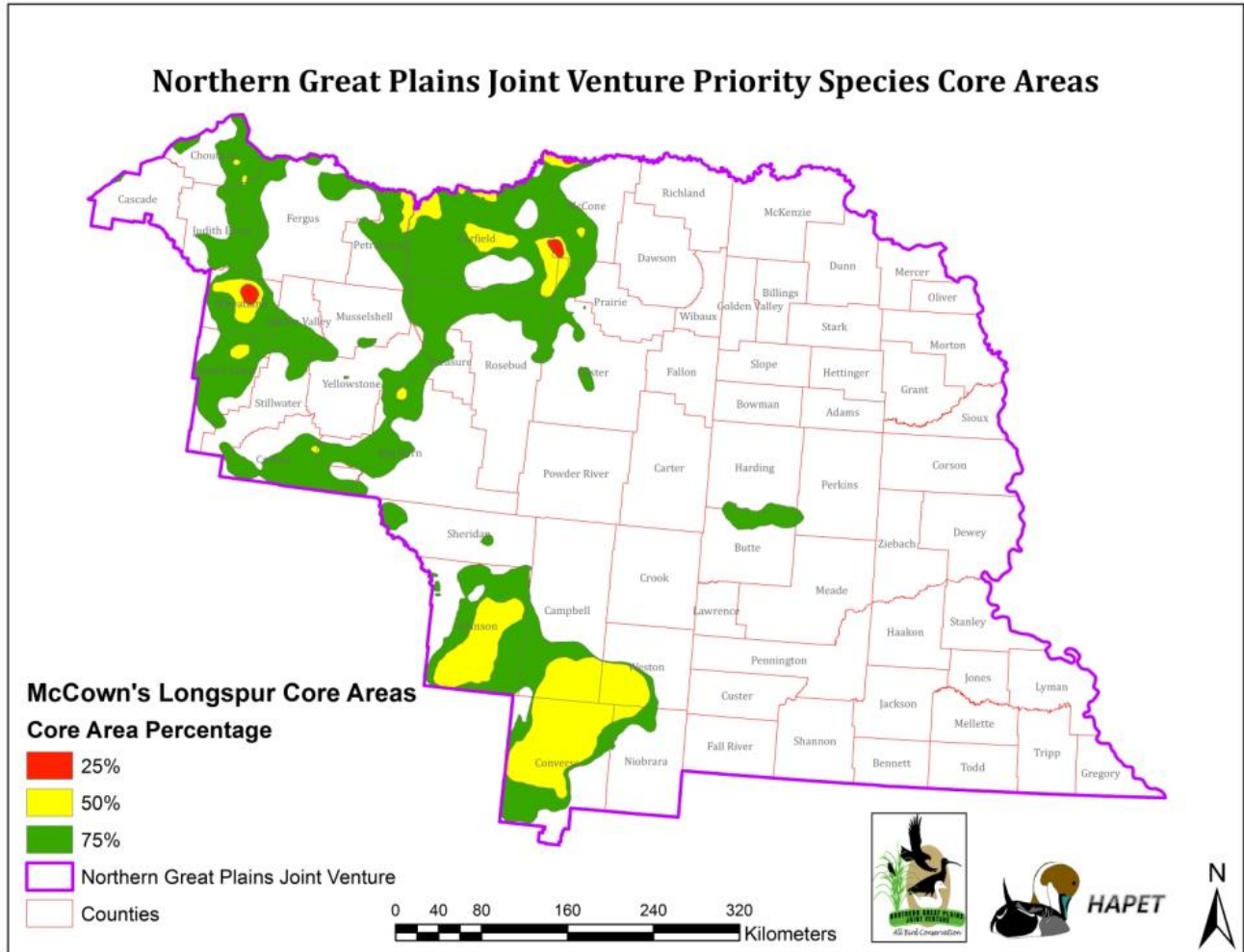


Management Recommendations (Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center):

- Provide large (>10 sq km) grassland areas
- Avoid burning where shrub mortality may be high
- Delay mowing until after the breeding season
- Avoid summer grazing in shortgrass habitats
- Heavy grazing may improve habitat where >30cm

McCown's Longspur

- Short-grass or heavily-grazed mixed-grass prairie
- Little litter, low vegetative cover, some bare ground
- Blue grama, buffalo grass; some in cultivated lands

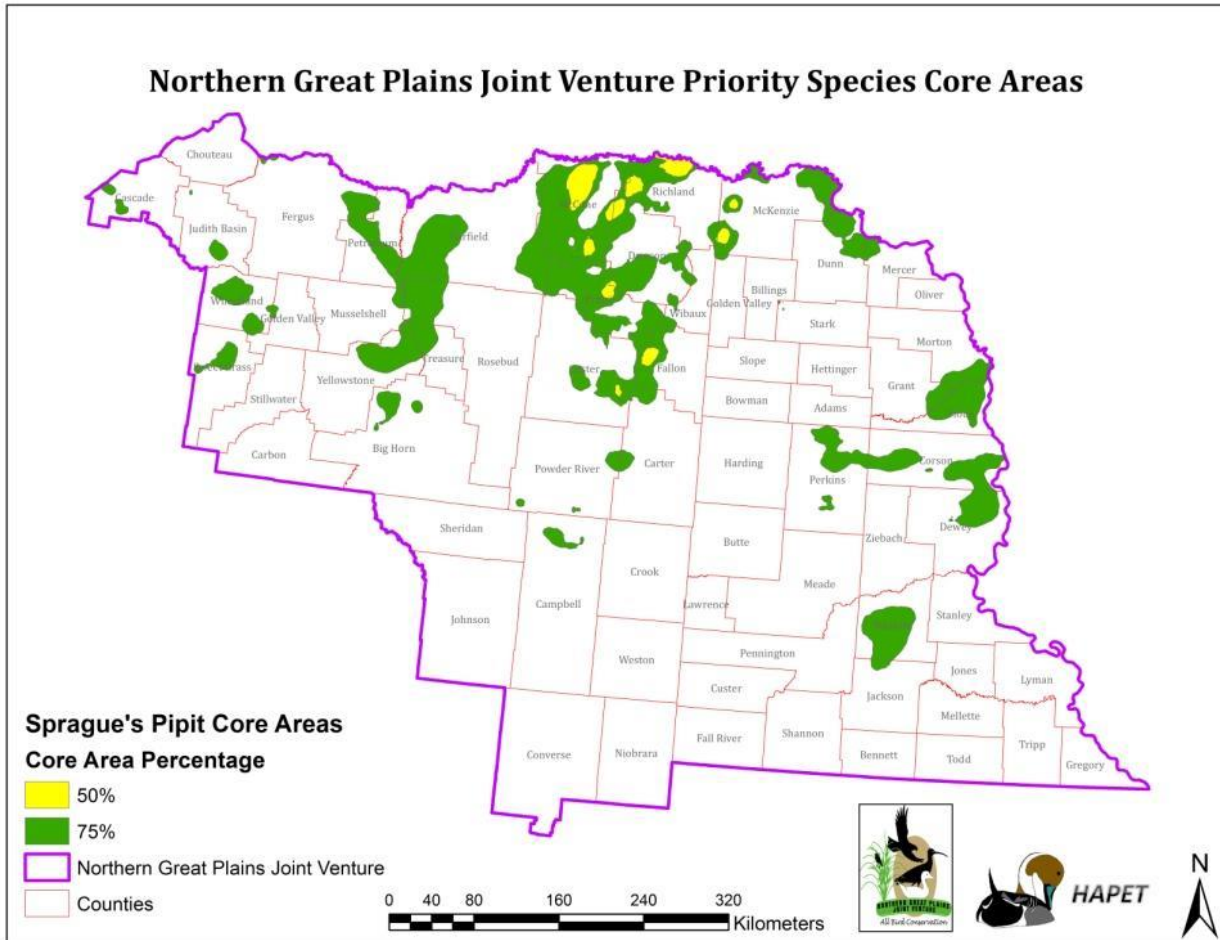


Management Recommendations (Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center):

- Provide large grassland areas
- Provide areas with little litter
- Manage for short, sparse grassland
- Use fire where historically suppressed
- Avoid overgrazing dry shortgrass
- Use grazing to manage mixed grass

Sprague's Pipit

- Grasslands of intermediate height and density
- Strong preference for native vegetation, little or no woody vegetation
- Most abundant in idle grassland, but tolerant of grazing

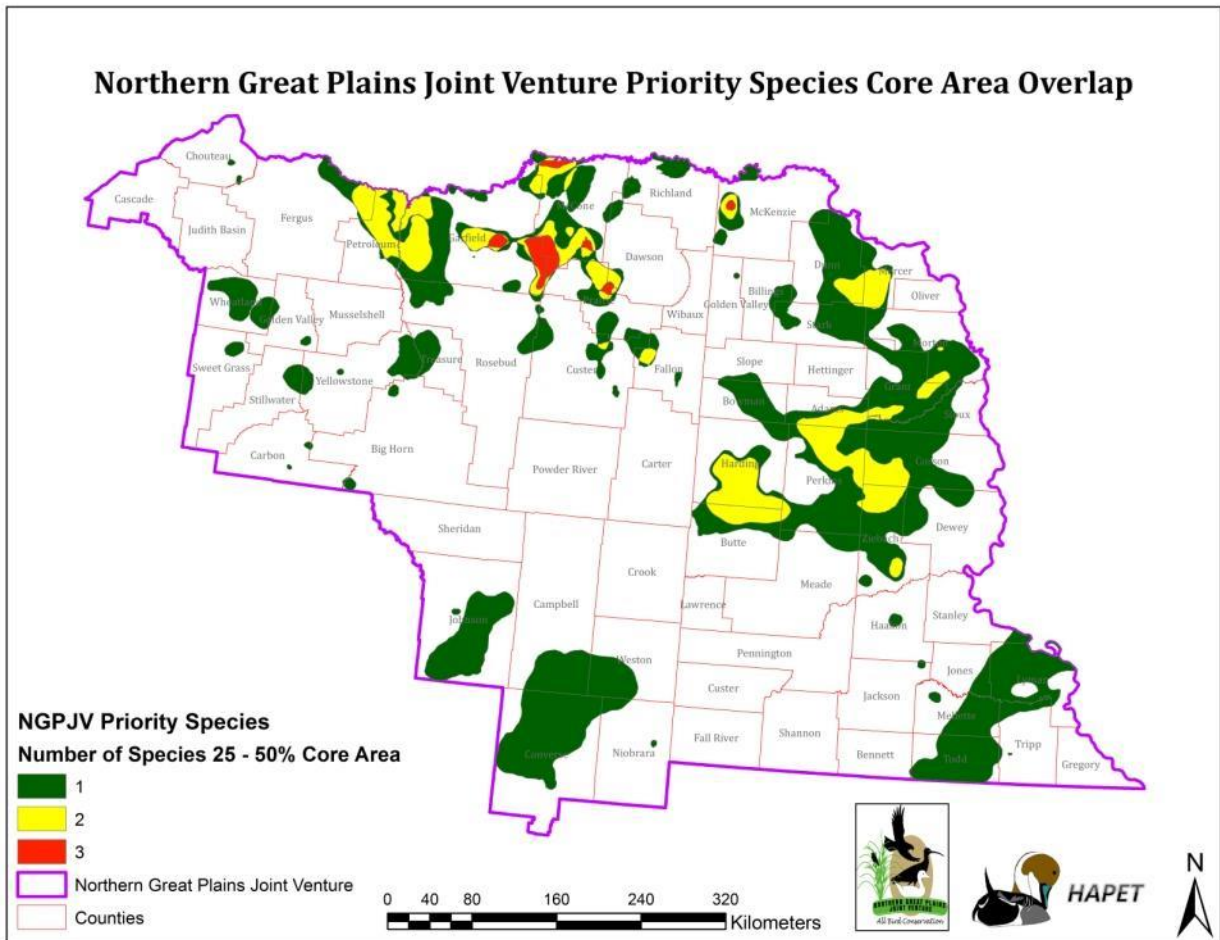


Management Recommendations (Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center):

- Protect large tracts of grassland
- Maintain grasslands free of woody vegetation
- Burn once every 2-4 years to reduce litter
- Mow haylands on a rotational basis
- Restore non-native uplands to native vegetation

Core Area Overlaps, Four PIF Watch List species dependent on grassland:

(Baird's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, McCown's Longspur, Sprague's Pipit)



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 prefer to target those counties in the high priority counties listed for the use of these funds in 2018.

State	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Lower Priority
MONTANA	Choteau Custer Fergus Garfield McCone Petroleum Powder River Rosebud	Dawson Musselshell Prairie Richland Sweet Grass Wheatland Yellowstone	Big Horn Carbon Carter Cascade Fallon Golden Valley Judith Basin Stillwater Treasure Wibaux
NORTH DAKOTA	Dunn Grant McKenzie Morton	Bowman Golden Valley Slope	Adams Billings Hettinger Mercer Oliver Sioux Stark
SOUTH DAKOTA	Perkins Harding Corson Butte Ziebach	Meade Shannon Haakon Jackson Mellette Fall River Dewey	Jones Pennington Bennett Lawrence Stanley Custer Lyman Todd Tripp Gregory
WYOMING	Campbell Converse	Niobrara Weston	Crook Johnson Sheridan

APPENDIX C – Outcomes

Definitions:

Protected=Acres acquired by fee title or conservation easement; note that the development of long-term management agreements or contracts may also be considered a step toward long-term protection;

Restored=The manipulation of physical, chemical and/or biological characteristics of a site with the goal of returning natural/historic functions to a habitat that has been degraded;

Enhanced=The manipulation of physical, chemical and/or biological characteristics of a site to improve specific functions.

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: