

PRAIRIE SEED PRODUCTION AND BIOENERGY PROJECT – MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Abstract: The 2007 Minnesota Legislative Session appropriated the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) \$125,000 “to support a technical advisory committee and for land management units that manage grasslands in order to develop plans to optimize native prairie seed harvest and replanting on state-owned lands”. Furthermore, the Legislature directed the MNDNR to establish a Technical Advisory Committee, and submit a report by December 15, 2007, on its outcomes, including criteria, guidelines, and recommendations for incentives. This directive led the MNDNR to create the Prairie Seed Production and BioEnergy Project (PSPB). Products developed by the PSPB project include criteria for identifying public and private lands that could produce local eco-type prairie seed, and criteria for identifying lands for prairie reconstruction that could possibly serve Clean Energy needs. This collaborative project also developed guidelines for producing prairie seed and reconstructing prairie that safeguard the ecological values of remaining native prairies. Furthermore, the project report includes incentives that might encourage production of local eco-type prairie seed and the reconstruction of prairies that could serve Clean Energy needs. This appropriation represents one element in the growing interest to find synergy between the need for grassland habitat and Clean Energy. New Clean Energy initiatives supporting large-scale reconstructing of prairie with local ecotype seed will likely necessitate harvesting from remnant native prairies. The report focuses on guiding prairie harvesting and reconstruction practices to ensure survival of the native prairie remaining in Minnesota. (PSPB report: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/pspb/index.html>)