

Project 193: Upper Fox River Headwaters Preservation

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Restoration Category: Wetlands and Associated Uplands Habitat Preservation

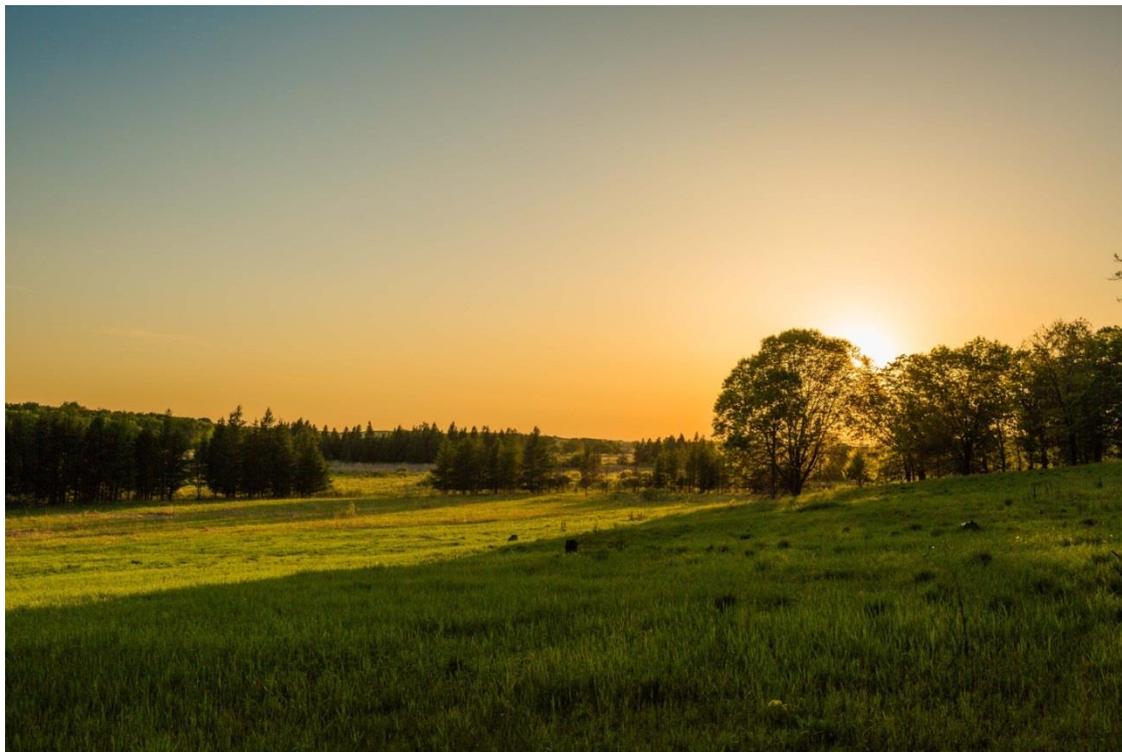
Actions: Acquisition of 198 acres in the headwaters of the upper Fox River watershed

Benefits: Protection of contiguous upland and wetland habitat, and restoration of cropland, to improve wildlife habitat and water quality

Funding: \$450,000 in natural resource damage assessment settlement funding contributed to the acquisition plus matching funds and/or in-kind services for a total budget of \$895,580

Timing: Land acquisition completed in 2014; restoration and management will be ongoing

Land Ownership: Natural Heritage Land Trust, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Ice Age Trail Alliance



Prairie (Photo by Brant Erickson)

MAIN BODY

Goal: To acquire, restore, and preserve habitat and water quality in the upper Fox River watershed.

Project Description:

A 198 acre parcel of land was acquired in Marquette County that connects the northeast corner of the Fox River National Wildlife Refuge, the northern boundary of Muir Park State Natural Area and John Muir Memorial Park, and permanently protects 38 acres of the original John Muir family farm, an important conservation legacy to the people of Wisconsin and the United States.

The project acquired and brought under management a mosaic of habitat types that support a variety of injured fish and wildlife species; this occurs not in isolation but as part of a larger block (1,204 acres) of already protected habitat at Fox River NWR and Muir Park State Natural Area/John Muir Memorial Park. The result is improved wildlife habitat and water quality along an un-named tributary of the Fox River which flows across the property and provides water quality improvements to the Fox River and its associated wetland complex at the Fox River NWR downstream from the project.

Benefits:

Acquisition of the property allows for the restoration of 140 acres of cropland, pasture, and developed area (farmstead) to native habitat types and enhancement of existing prairie, wetland, and woodland/savanna natural communities, with the goal of improving wildlife habitat and water quality in the tributary which flows across the property to the Fox River.

Migratory bird species are expected to benefit from this project including many regional conservation priority species such as the Henslow's sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*), yellow rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*), Eastern meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*), and the American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*). Herptiles expected to benefit include slender glass lizard (*Ophisaurus attenuatus*), Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*), and Northern cricket frog (*Acris crepitans*).

Spatial Extent of Project:

This project resulted in the preservation of 198 acres, including the restoration of 17 acres of wetland habitat, 2 acres of wet-mesic prairie, and 40 acres of oak-hickory woodland/savanna. Natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) settlement funds were credited with the preservation of 99.5 acres (approximately 50% of the total); other funds were credited with the preservation of the remaining 98.5 acres.

Status and Funding:

The land acquisition was completed in 2014, as well as the removal of buildings on the property. The project used \$450,000 in NRDA settlement funding to accomplish this. The eastern portion of the property was transferred to the Ice Age Trail Alliance in 2015, and future plans include transferring the

western portion of the property (estimated for 2017) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for ongoing restoration and management activities.

Project Accomplishments:

The project has successfully acquired 198 acres of land, adjacent to existing natural areas, that is now placed in conservation ownership. The acquisition provides opportunity for restoration of habitat for wildlife, as well as ecosystem protection and additional public access for outdoor recreational activities and historical significance.

Contact Information:

Natural Heritage Land
Trust

<http://www.nhlt.org/>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Service, Fox River
National Wildlife
Refuge,

foxriver@fws.gov

Ice Age Trail Alliance,

info@iceagetrail.org



Wet Prairie; photo courtesy of Natural Heritage Land Trust