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Transmitted via email

May 15, 2008

MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 180-8-6

SUBJECT: CPA – MINNESOTA COUNTY BIOLOGIC SURVEY (MCBS) – NATIVE PRAIRIE DATA

Purpose. To distribute guidance on the use of the Minnesota DNR-developed County Biologic Survey – Native Prairie GIS data layer.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2008.

Minnesota DNR has recently provided NRCS a data layer of known historic remnant prairies. Each Area GIS specialist has been provided this information for their counties. This data layer provides the locations of prairies documented by the DNR's Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS) through field survey activities conducted between 1987 and 2007. As of 2007 the MCBS surveys have not been completed in all Minnesota counties where prairie historically occurred. Attached to this bulletin is a table indicating where this information is available. Counties where MCBS data is absent from this layer does not indicate that prairie does not occur there.

When using this data layer the following limitations exist which could lead to finding what is actually present on the land being different than that presented in the data:

- Some sites identified as prairie have been cultivated or otherwise destroyed since they were mapped.
- Some prairie remnants may not have been mapped in this layer because they did not meet MCBS criteria for surveying and mapping; these include prairies that were smaller than minimum size criteria of 5-10 acres, and prairies that were too highly disturbed by grazing.

Technical staff performing conservation planning activities and working with USDA programs can reference this data layer for:

- possible proximity to native prairie remnants;
- potential existence of natural areas;
- the possible existence of vegetative Threatened and Endangered Species;
- as a reference aid for the documentation of National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) procedures;
- as a reference aid to document USDA conservation program eligibility determinations; and
- as an inventory tool in the conservation planning process.

Note: technical staff working on USDA programs will not solely rely on the information in this data layer to document potential NEPA concerns and program eligibility.



### Process to Use the Remnant Prairie Data Layer

For the location(s) being planned and evaluated the following process will be used when referencing the MCBS data layer.

1. Determine the site location and check the DNR-MCBS prairie data layer to identify if a documented prairie is within or adjacent to the site.
2. Check a recent aerial photo to verify that the DNR-MCBS prairie still exists.
3. An on-site field verification is required for NEPA documentation and USDA eligibility determinations such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
4. When an on-site evaluation finds that a potential unmapped prairie remnant exists, additional assistance can be requested through the Area Resource Conservationist (ARC) or by contacting a local DNR Area Wildlife Manager for further assistance. (For contact information, see the DNR web page at: [http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/contact/wildlife\\_managers.pdf](http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/contact/wildlife_managers.pdf).)

Prairie polygons in this data layer come from the Native Plant Community shapefile, which is published and distributed for both areas considered to be 'final', as well as other 'preliminary' datasets that are in development. The stage of development of the data in each county can be found in the table attached. Also, some counties do not yet have prairie data available and that information is found in the table as well.

A metadata file has been included with this data layer. It would be helpful to consult that metadata for more information about the creation of native plant community polygons, which includes the native prairie community polygons in this data layer.

Concerns and questions on this data and its use should be directed through your ARC or Area GIS Specialist.

/s/

WILLIAM HUNT  
State Conservationist

Attachment

DIST: AO  
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Mark Oja, Biologist, St. Paul, MN