

Climate Resiliency: Grasslands, Working Lands

2023 Proposed Funding

BWSR is requesting **\$22 million** from the general fund to restore privately-owned grasslands and working lands. These initiatives align with the Minnesota Climate Action Framework's natural and working lands initiative to sequester and store carbon in grasslands, wetlands, and other landscapes with high conservation value.

What are conservation easements?

Private landowners work with BWSR to voluntarily take marginal cropland and pastures out of agricultural production, placing the land into a permanently protected conservation easement.

Beneficial conservation practices are then installed on the land. These include native vegetation establishment, wetland restorations, tree planting, and construction of structures to manage water and mitigate flooding concerns.

BWSR specializes in establishing and enhancing conservation easements. The RIM Reserve Conservation Easement Program is BWSR's premier easement program, having successfully restored and protected more than 300,000 acres of private lands over the past 30 years. In recent years, the RIM program has been expanded to target sensitive grasslands and working lands in addition to traditional farmland.

Value of grasslands

Grasslands comprised of native species provide habitat for a wide range of grassland-dependent wildlife including endangered plants, birds and butterflies. Traditionally, easement programs have focused on retired cropland. In 2019, BWSR extended its Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program to include grasslands; this shift allows the state to protect high-value remnant prairies.

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A grassland easement in Rock County. Photo credit: BWSR