

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Legislative Report

January, 1988



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RIM: an Introduction

*Reinvesting in Minnesota's \$1,000,000,000
fish- and wildlife-based recreation industry.*



Thirty years ago, Minnesota was a pheasant hunter's dream. Then habitat was plowed under, the birds disappeared, and hunters went elsewhere.

REINVEST IN Minnesota's natural resources. That was the recommendation of the Citizen's Commission to Promote Hunting and Fishing in Minnesota, established by Governor Perpich in July, 1984. The commission found that the state's fish and wildlife resources — on which fishing, hunting and other wildlife-oriented recreation depends — could not withstand any additional recreational pressure. Because of a reduction in wildlife habitat and the deterioration of water quality, the commission concluded that Minnesota's fish- and wildlife-based recreation could not improve, unless additional habitat was provided to support fish and wildlife populations.

The commission's report pointed to the immediate need to revitalize forest, farmland and aquatic habitat and protect the state's soil and water resources. The report concluded that if Minnesota is to continue receiving the estimated one billion dollars that hunting and fishing bring to our economy, we must begin at once to maintain and improve the state's fish and wildlife resources and increase outdoor recreation

opportunities. The result, said the commission's members, will be a revitalized natural environment and a healthier state economy—particularly in rural areas, where most outdoor recreation takes place.

A coalition of sportsmen, environmental and agricultural organizations immediately supported the commission's recommendations. This coalition worked closely with Governor Perpich, the Minnesota Legislature and state agencies to create the RIM program, which began in 1986.

RIM is our state government's response to the needs of Minnesota's fish, wildlife, soil and water resources. It includes the RIM Reserve (made up of Marginal Ag Land, Wetland Restoration and Living Snowfence), Critical Habitat Private Sector Match, Wildlife Enhancement, Fisheries Enhancement, and Prairie Bank.

This report summarizes the accomplishments of the RIM program administered jointly by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Natural Resources. It also summarizes the expected accomplishments during the remainder of the 1988/89 biennium. ■

RIM RESERVE

THREE PROGRAMS make up RIM Reserve: Marginal Ag Lands, Wetlands Restoration and Living Snowfence. They are designed to help restore Minnesota's natural resources through erosion and sediment control, wildlife habitat restoration and water quality improvement. The RIM Reserve Program is the only one of its kind in the country. It unites farmers, sportsmen and other conservationists in preserving Minnesota's natural heritage for future generations.

Marginal Ag Lands

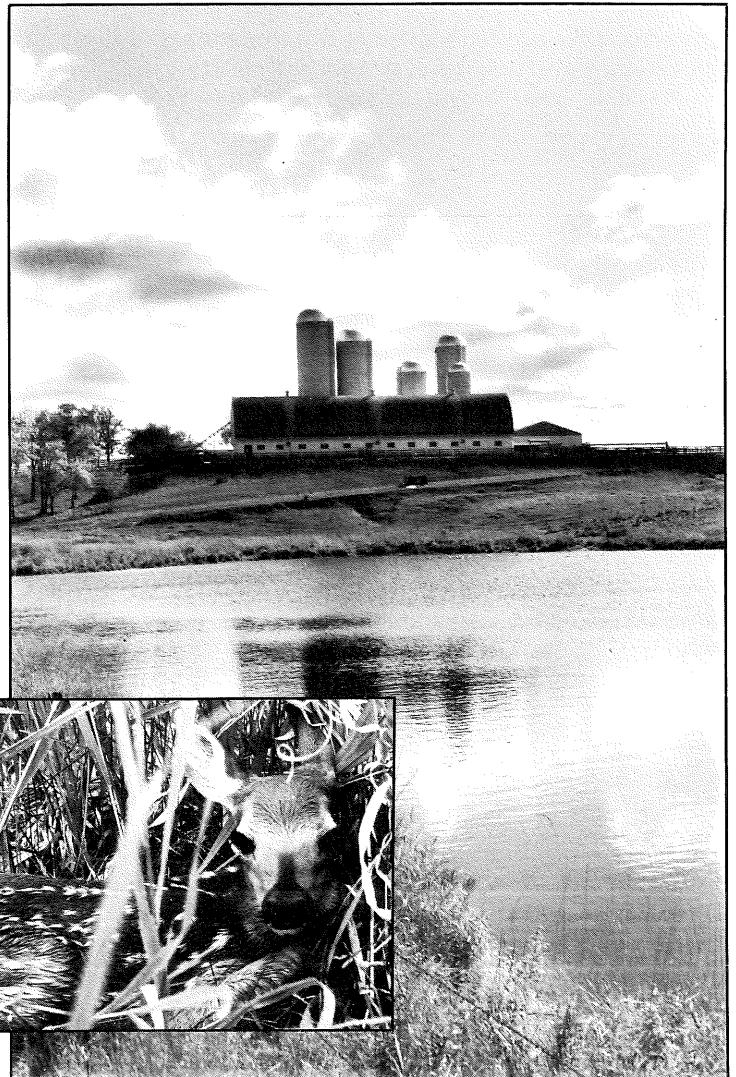
ALMOST 2.5 MILLION acres of Minnesota farmland are subject to high erosion rates. RIM Reserve Marginal Ag Lands Program pays farmers to take this land out of production and convert it to wildlife habitat.

Marginal Ag Lands complements the Federal Conservation Reserve Program by offering landowners 20-year or permanent easements. Payment is based on local cash rental rates.

Permanent cover must be established on the enrolled land to reduce erosion, improve water quality and develop and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.

Thousands of acres have been enrolled in the RIM Reserve Marginal Ag Lands Program, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture estimates that an additional 800,000 to 1 million acres are eligible.

By protecting our precious topsoil from erosion, RIM Reserve enhances Minnesota's agricultural industry and creates wildlife habitat, benefiting farmers and sportsmen alike. ■



When cropland is planted back to its natural state, wildlife such as deer have more places to live.

Wetlands Restoration

DURING THE 1970s, increased grain exports and high grain prices encouraged farmers to plant fencerow to fencerow. Thousands of acres of wetlands were drained and cultivated, decreasing wildlife habitat and creating water quality problems.

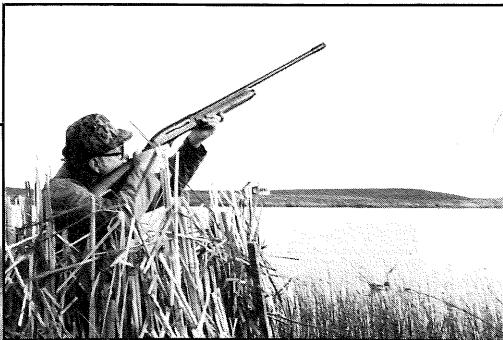
The RIM Reserve Wetlands Restoration Program pays landowners to restore their previously drained wetlands. It offers landowners perpetual easements, reimburses the cost of cover seeding and helps pay for any structures needed to restore the wetlands. Wildlife groups may also help fund restoration efforts.

A unique and exciting program, RIM Reserve

Wetlands Restoration benefits farmers by paying them to retire land that in rainy years may be too wet to farm, and letting them focus their management efforts on better land.

It benefits sportsmen by creating wetland habitat, increasing wildlife numbers, and improving tourism and hunting opportunities.

And lastly, Wetlands Restoration benefits all Minnesotans by helping control sedimentation and erosion, reducing flood damage, and improving water quality. ■



As more wetlands are restored, duck numbers in Minnesota will increase, and waterfowl hunting should improve.



Living Snowfence

WIND EROSION is a serious problem in areas of the state that do not have natural forest cover. The third RIM Reserve program, Living Snowfence, encourages landowners to plant windbreaks along highway right-of-ways to decrease snowdrift, lessen wind erosion, and provide valuable wildlife habitat.

The windbreak must be within 300 feet of a state or county highway right-of-way and have a minimum of six rows of trees and shrubs. RIM Reserve pays for

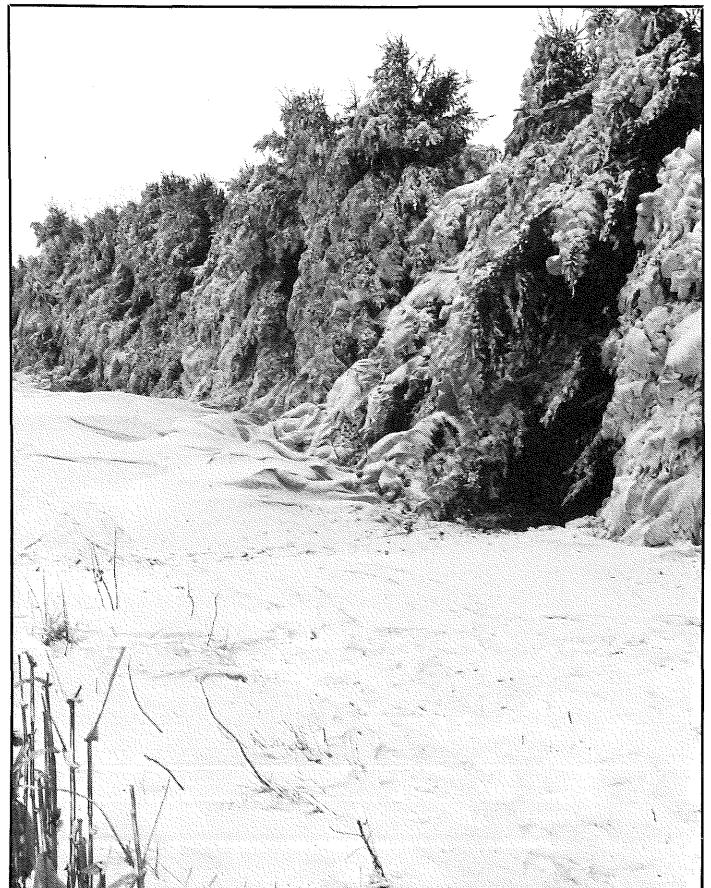
perpetual easements and pays landowners up to \$300 an acre for planting trees.

A living snowfence provides winter roosting habitat for pheasants, nesting habitat for songbirds, and travel lanes for deer and other wildlife.

In addition, it cuts winter highway maintenance costs and improves safety by reducing drifting snow, and lessens the effect of wind erosion on valuable topsoil. ■



Pheasants and other wildlife need shelter with nearby food to survive a bad winter.



Accomplishments

IN 1986, 2,149 applicants requested approximately \$25.5 million to retire nearly 60,000 acres under the RIM Reserve Program. Approximately 21,000 acres enrolled through about 900 easements were retired with the 1986 funding. Of the 900 easements, 100 were perpetual and the balance were ten-year.

Two new options were added to the RIM Reserve Program in 1987: Wetlands Restoration and Living Snowfence. These, along with Marginal Ag Lands, made up the 1987 RIM Reserve Program.

A two-week sign-up for Wetlands Restoration and Marginal Ag Lands was conducted in October. Over 400 applications were received statewide, requesting approximately \$5.5 million (\$4.5 million was available). Nearly 60% of the applications were for perpetual easements, including 107 applications to restore drained wetlands. Approximately 10,000 acres will be enrolled.

The sign-up deadline for the Living Snowfence program is the summer of 1988 in the following nine pilot Soil and Water Conservation Districts: Lyon, Blue Earth, Watonwan, Lincoln, Nobles, Cottonwood, Mower, Stevens and Morrison.

RIM Reserve is administered locally by the 91 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). ■

A county-by-county breakdown of applications taken and land enrolled in RIM Reserve is available from the Department of Agriculture, RIM Reserve, 90 West Plato Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55107.

RIM Reserve Plan — F.Y. 1989

PRESERVING AND enhancing Minnesota's natural resources will continue to be the goal of the RIM Reserve Program.

Perpetual easements will be emphasized in 1989, as the program strives to create and preserve a variety of wildlife habitats.

RIM Reserve complements Department of Natural Resources RIM programs, the federal Conservation Reserve Program and other conservation efforts. In addition, RIM Reserve will continue to work closely with private conservation groups to enhance fish and wildlife habitat, control soil erosion and sedimentation, and improve water quality.

Another late-summer sign-up is proposed for Marginal Ag Lands and Wetlands Restoration. Pilot efforts will continue for Living Snowfence, with an extended sign-up period.

Consistent with our goals, RIM Reserve plans to support Rural Finance Authority legislation.

A comprehensive brochure and portable display are planned to enhance and maintain communications with the many groups interested in the RIM Reserve program. As one of the most innovative conservation efforts in the country, RIM Reserve will strive for a consistent state policy to retire marginal ag land, restore drained wetlands, and establish living snowfences. ■

FOR MORE
INFO

If you'd like to know more about RIM Reserve, call your local Soil and Water Conservation District office.

Wildlife Enhancement

WILDLIFE IS a product of our land and water. To produce healthy wildlife populations we need to actively manage and protect areas where wild animals live.

The object of the RIM wildlife enhancement program is to improve food and cover for wildlife on public land, increase wildlife populations and provide additional opportunities for wildlife-related recreation.

Most of the projects within the Wildlife Enhancement Program are targeted toward Minnesota's northern forests and forest-grassland transition zones, which are prime areas for white-tailed deer, moose, sharp-tailed grouse, waterfowl and other game and nongame species. (The Section of Wildlife is also working closely with the Department of Agriculture to increase wildlife populations in Minnesota's agricultural areas through the RIM Conservation Reserve Program.) The projects in the wildlife enhancement program cover almost 22,184 acres of forest, brushland, wetland and prairie. RIM funding has included \$2.7 million in bonding and \$840,000 in general funds. Of that amount, \$480,000 is targeted for work on private lands.

In the northern forests, access trails are being built and forest openings, clearings and firebreaks are being



WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT

A: Completed Projects (7/86-12/87)				
B: Projects Initiated or Planned for Completion (1/88-6/89)				
Project Type	Number of Projects		Area Improved (Acres)	
	A	B*	A	B*
Habitat Development				
Wetland	1	6	71	816
Grassland	3	52	10,665	66,690
Forest	20	32	9,648	16,516
Habitat Acquisition	1	—	1,800**	—
Hab. Surveys and Planning	1	3	—	—
Private Lands Habitat	—	225	—	1,880
Rec. Development	9	17	—	—
Total:	35	335	22,184	85,902

* estimated

**joint wildlife/fisheries

cut. Forest management programs, which benefit deer and grouse populations by increasing habitat diversity, are nearly doubled by this RIM program.

In Minnesota's wetlands — vital breeding areas for waterfowl, furbearers and many songbirds — RIM funds are being used to build structures that will let wildlife managers control water levels, improving the growth of aquatic vegetation used by ducks as food and brood cover.

Another aspect of the Wildlife Enhancement Program is prescribed burning, which has been an important tool for improving habitat used by sharp-tailed grouse and other grassland and brushland wildlife species. Last year's dry and windy weather kept the DNR from doing as much prescribed burning as planned, but if weather conditions are favorable in 1988 and '89, prescribed burns will be an important aspect of the program.

So far, 35 projects have been completed as part of the Wildlife Enhancement Program, including the joint Fisheries/Wildlife Blackhoof River project (1,800 acres) in Carlton County. The addition of four wildlife professionals in the coming year will help accelerate the completion of planned projects. ■

Fisheries Enhancement

OVER TWO million anglers — including nearly one-half of all our residents — fish Minnesota's lakes, streams and rivers. And fishing here is expected to increase by 15% over the next 20 years — more than any other outdoor recreation activity.

Minnesota's waters meet the demand for quality fishing, but must keep up with the increasing amount of angling pressure. To meet that need, we must protect and improve fish habitat and game fish populations and also provide more access to fishing waters. RIM funding has provided \$ 6.4 million in bonding and \$360,000 in general funds to help meet that need.

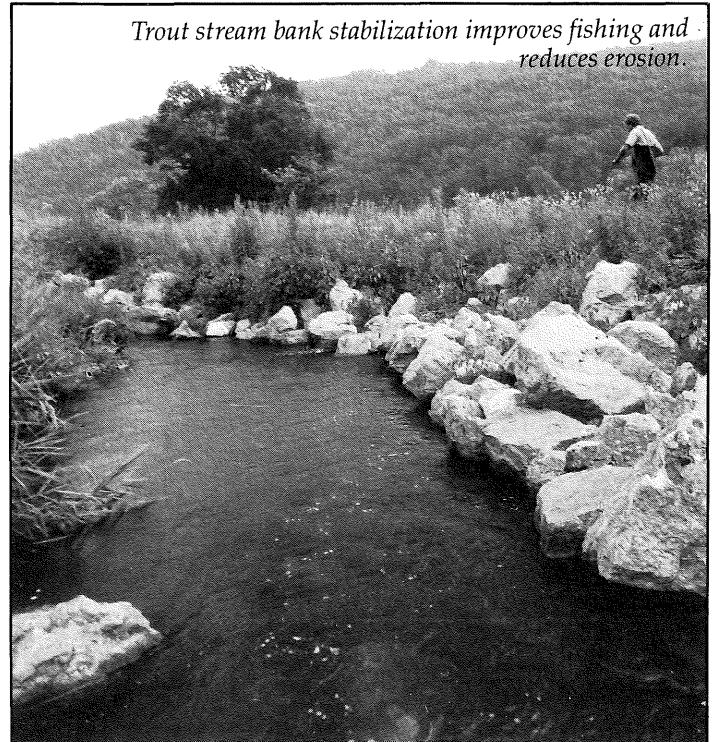
Fish habitat — places where fish live and breed — is being developed throughout the state as part of the Fisheries Enhancement Program. Walleye spawning areas were constructed this year at Lake Winnibigoshish, and a bid was awarded for spawning site development at Carls Lake, in Scott County.

Among the other habitat development projects were the installation at five lakes of aeration systems (which prevent winterkill and maintain permanent game fish populations on shallow waters), and improvements such as bank stabilization and cover on two trout streams. In addition, rough-fish barriers, which keep undesirable fish such as carp out of game fish waters, were installed on five lakes, and the construction of additional barriers on four lakes and streams is in progress.

Improvements at the Waterville Hatchery and the purchase of the Peterson Trout Farm will greatly enhance the state's ability to stock trout, salmon and warmwater species in Lake Superior and inland lakes and streams.

Fishing piers, providing shore-bound anglers access to better fishing, were installed this year in eight lakes (Cass, Hubbard, Otter Tail, Mille Lacs, Crow Wing, Dakota and Nicollet counties) and one was built on the Mississippi River (Aitkin County). Also, the DNR has completed acquisition on the Blackfoot River (Carlton County) as part of a joint project with the Section of Wildlife.

Plans are in place to complete habitat improvement on four trout and one warmwater streams, control rough fish on three lakes and one stream, and establish an additional aeration project. The acquisition of public access will be completed on two streams, and an additional fishing pier is to be installed on the Mississippi River. In addition, the DNR will be adding four fisheries professionals to carry out these and other projects and begin operation of the Peterson Trout Farm. ■



FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT

Project Type	Number of Projects		Area Improved	
	A	B*	A	B*
A: Completed Projects (7/86-12/87) B: Projects Initiated or Planned for Completion (1/88-6/89)				
Habitat Improvement				
Streams/Rivers	2	2	3.5 miles	32 miles
Lakes	11	7	48,485 acres	4,000
Recreational Access				
Streams/Rivers	1	2	6.7 miles	11 miles
Lakes	9	—	7,000 acres	—
Fish Production	2	1	Statewide	Statewide
Total:	25	12	10.2 miles 55,485 acres	43 miles 3,500 acres
* estimated				

Critical Habitat Private Matching

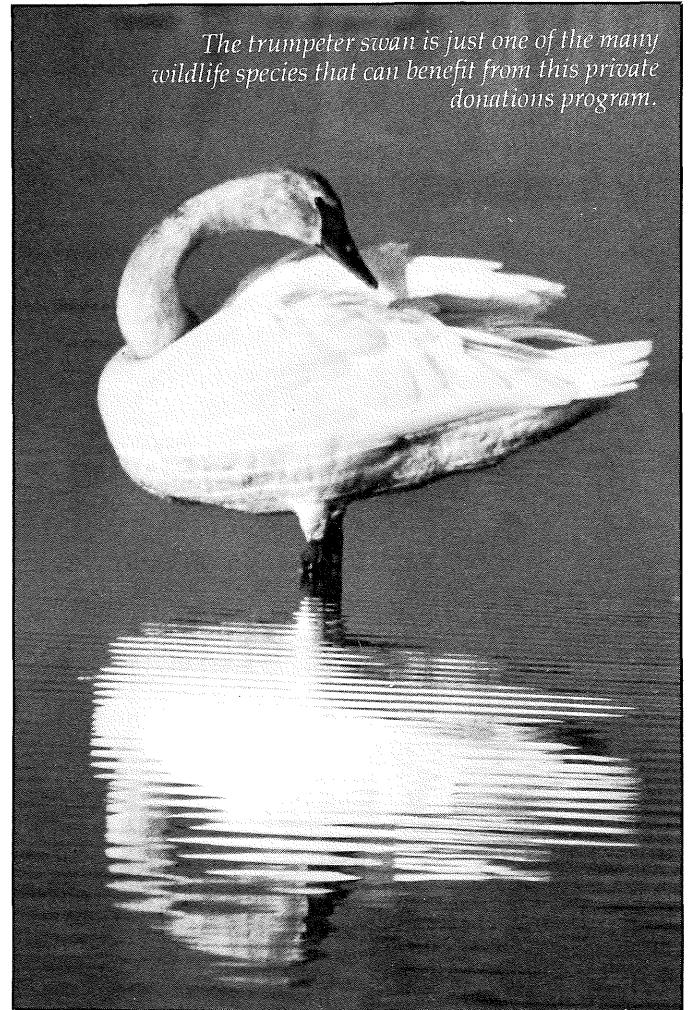
THIS UNIQUE RIM program encourages private citizens and organizations to contribute to the acquisition and development of critical fish and wildlife habitat by having their contributions matched from a special fund. Donations may be in cash, land or interests in land, and the donors may request that their contributions be applied to specific critical habitat projects.

“Critical” habitat is specified in state law (84.944) based on its significance to fish, wildlife, natural ecological communities and related outdoor recreation. Donations that meet the basic criteria of critical habitat are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, as long as sufficient matching funds are available. When funds become limited, the DNR gives priority to projects that assist endangered and threatened species, natural ecological communities, other important fish and wildlife species, and outdoor recreation, in that order.

Land donations that meet the criteria become part of Minnesota’s outdoor recreation system. Most land donations are designated as Wildlife Management Areas; others become parts of Scientific and Natural Areas, state forests and state parks.

If private citizens wish to donate land that doesn’t meet the criteria, the land may be sold by the DNR and proceeds will be deposited in the Critical Habitat Private Sector Matching fund.

RIM legislation has provided \$3.7 million in bonding to support this initiative. Since July, 1986, nearly 4,000 acres, valued at \$1 million, have been donated through this program. In addition, \$190,000 in cash has been donated and an additional \$168,000 has been pledged. Donations currently being appraised and reviewed by the DNR total \$313,000. ■



The trumpeter swan is just one of the many wildlife species that can benefit from this private donations program.

Donations to Critical Habitat		
Donation Type	Number of Donations	Value
Land	22	\$1,169,655
Cash	61	\$190,422
Pledges	23	\$168,840
	total: 106	total: \$1,528,917

CRITICAL HABITAT MATCHING

Project Type	A: Complete Projects (7/86-12/87)		B: Projects Initiated or Planned for Completion (1/88-6/89)	
	Number of Projects		Area Improved (Acres)	
	A	B*	A	B*
Land Donations	23	13	3,868	1,779
Land Purchases	3	31	764	3,065
Habitat Development	5	27	2,783	7,000
* estimated				

Aspen Recycling

WHEN ASPEN forests are managed to create a mixture of tree age classes, conditions for an increase in ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer and moose populations are ideal. But without forestry management or natural disturbances that simulate harvesting, such as fire, aspen forests become over-mature. They slowly die, and are eventually replaced by more-shade-tolerant trees, which are often poor habitat for many forest wildlife species. In addition to helping wildlife populations, aspen management also can provide the resource base necessary to ensure future wood supplies for Minnesota's forest-product industries.

In the early part of this century, ruffed grouse and white-tailed deer populations in northeastern Minnesota increased dramatically following the extensive logging that helped rejuvenate aspen forests. As the large trees were cut and cleared away, sunlight was able to reach the forest floor, creating ideal conditions for the regeneration of young aspen.

The logging industry in many parts of northern Minnesota has declined recently. One of the effects has been a reduction in the harvest of mature aspen, which is in oversupply. Because of this, there has been no new aspen growth, which is important browse for grouse and deer.

Through the RIM Aspen Recycling Program ("recycling," because aspen, through harvesting, is a renewable tree species), local contractors (often loggers) are paid to harvest mature aspen on state land. The contractors make sealed bids on each aspen recycling project, and contracts are awarded to the lowest bidders.

The 1986 Legislature appropriated \$1 million to this RIM program for the 1986-87 fiscal year. That year, almost 4,000 acres of aspen were recycled. An additional \$900,000 was appropriated in 1987 for the current biennium. Another 4,900 acres are being offered for recycling during the winter of 1987-88.

Benefiting immediately from the projects have been local loggers, who have found additional employment with the program. As the clear-cut areas begin producing thick stands of young aspen, grouse, deer and other wildlife will thrive. The long-term results will be a healthier rural economy, sounder forest management and improved wildlife populations. ■



Aspen recycling creates jobs, renews forests and benefits wildlife such as ruffed grouse.



ASPEN RECYCLING

Year	Acres Offered	Acres Awarded	Acres Completed
7/86-6/87	5,024	5,024	3,976
7/87-6/88	4,930	1,695*	150*

*as of 12/15/87

Prairie Bank



Prairies are part of our heritage. The Prairie Bank preserves tracts of natural grasslands, protecting prairie plant species and wildlife species—such as the marbled godwit—for future Minnesotans to enjoy.



LESS THAN one-half of one percent remains of the over 18 million acres of native prairie that once covered Minnesota. Fire suppression, intensive grazing and conversion to cropland have reduced the amount of native prairie to about 75,000 acres.

The RIM Prairie Bank Program was established in 1987 to help protect and conserve these remaining natural grasslands. Under this program, the DNR has the authority to enter into conservation easements with landowners who own native prairie. For land to be eligible for the Prairie Bank, it must have never been plowed, be covered with less than 10 percent trees and have predominately native prairie vegetation.

Landowners are paid through the Prairie Bank Program to protect and manage their prairie land. The acquisition of conservation easements will permit the DNR to work cooperatively with these landowners to preserve native grassland. The management of prairie bank easements may consist of prescribed burning,

prescribed grazing or regulated haying to enhance and maintain the native prairie plants.

The Prairie Bank Program was allocated \$300,000 in 1987 for the purchase of native prairie easements, either limited (a minimum of 20 years) or permanent. Permanent easements, however, must be given the highest priority.

The acquisition of Prairie Bank easements is expected to get under way early in 1988. In October, 1987, the DNR hired a prairie biologist who is administering the Prairie Bank program to help develop prairie landscape reserves and protect prairie tracts in danger of being destroyed.

Protecting Minnesota's prairies not only conserves endangered grassland plants and animals, it also inhibits soil erosion, maintains water quality, provides recreational opportunities, and enhances scenery and land values. ■



“With our proposed plan we have an historic opportunity to provide national leadership by demonstrating to other states that a sweeping natural resources restoration plan can be used to benefit the state tourist economy and the state farm economy.”

— from *“The Report of the Governor’s Citizen Commission to Promote Hunting and Fishing in Minnesota,”* December, 1984.

REINVEST IN MINNESOTA (RIM) is administered under the Department of Agriculture, Board of Water and Soil Resources, 90 West Plato Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55107, (612) 296-3767, Wayne Edgerton, Coordinator; and the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4020, (612) 296-6157, Ray Norrgard, Coordinator.