



Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA)

What is the MRPHA?

- In 1994, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) identified a 50,000-acre area in southwestern Wisconsin, now called the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA), as the best place in the state for retaining and recovering habitat for upland prairie/grassland species on a landscape scale.
- The MRPHA also has good conservation opportunities for oak savanna, streams, and sedge meadows.

Where is the MPRHA located?

- The MRPHA is located in southwest Dane, southeast Iowa, and northern Green counties in southwestern Wisconsin.

Who is involved with the MRPHA?

- Nine public and private conservation partners, The Prairie Enthusiasts, WDNR, Pheasants Forever, Blue Mounds Area Project, Driftless Area Land Conservancy, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Southwest Badger RC&D, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Nature Conservancy, have combined their forces in an attempt to maintain and restore prairie and grassland habitat within a matrix of working farmland.
- Private landowners are encouraged to keep their land in pasture, hay or fallow field, or even work with conservation groups to restore native prairies on their properties.

Why is the MPRHA important to conservation efforts?

- The MRPHA has a rare combination of significant amounts of original prairie and extensive 'surrogate' grassland bird habitat in the form of pastures, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grasslands, hay, and small grains.
- The MRPHA has been approved as an Important Bird Area, which provides essential habitat to many species of breeding and non-breeding grassland and savanna birds.
- More than 100 remnants of the original tallgrass prairie, including 13 rare plant species, can be found within the MRPHA.
- The MRPHA is also home to a major concentration of the state-endangered regal fritillary butterfly which requires large tracts of original prairie sod as well as 14 rare and declining grassland bird species.
- The MRPHA contains the headwaters of the Pecatonica River and many high-quality trout streams.

The Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area is a cooperative project of 9 partner groups representing the private, state and federal sectors. Goals of the partnership include: 1) Provide and maintain viable prairie, savanna, grassland, and aquatic habitat, for the many plants and animals that depend on these habitats for their survival; 2) Maintain an economically viable rural and agricultural landscape; 3) Provide and encourage traditional recreational opportunities which are compatible with the conservation goals; and 4) Integrate best applied science through the use of continued monitoring and adaptive management. For more information, contact Katie Abbott, Project Coordinator, at (608)935-2791 ext. 134, or at katie.abbott@rcdnet.net.



How can the public get involved with conservation efforts in the MRPHA

- The public can attend field trips and workshops, or volunteer to help with prairie seed collection and planting, invasive species control efforts, tree and brush removal, and prescribed burning.
- They can also make donations to support land acquisition and management efforts, and encourage local land-use planners to consider the importance of grassland habitat.
- Landowners can use bird-compatible farming practices, or sign up for federal or state conservation programs to create or manage grassland habitat. They may also be able to sell or donate a conservation easement to protect habitat from development.
- There are opportunities for water quality monitoring, citizens can encourage planners to consider grassland habitat and water quality, and landowners can use bird and water-friendly farming practices. There are also opportunities for stream restoration projects.

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