

# CHALLENGES IN MANAGING FARMLAND FOR CONSERVATION

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## FARMLAND AS HABITAT

- ▣ Future of grassland birds tied directly to beef cattle grazing
- ▣ Grassland bird populations declining 3-4% per year
- ▣ Pasture acreage dropping



## CARDEN ALVAR

Over 8000 acres  
owned by NCC, OP,  
Couchiching

About half is  
grassland habitat

Bobolink,  
Meadowlark,  
Loggerhead Shrike  
Barn Swallow



## GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Needs active  
management  
intervention to  
maintain or renew

Minimal mgmt by  
farmers

Finding funding for  
ongoing mgmt is a  
challenge for most  
organizations



## PASTURE LOSSES IN TWO DIRECTIONS

ABANDONMENT



"IMPROVEMENT"



## STRATEGIES

- ▣ Manage conservation lands for grassland habitat
- ▣ Provide cost-shared projects with private landowners
- ▣ Use habitat offset funds for restoration



## MANAGING CONSERVATION LANDS

- ▣ Maintain cattle grazing to manage grass height
- ▣ Prescribed burning
- ▣ Control invasive species



## WORKING WITH LOCAL FARMERS

Cost-share incentives for fencing, water systems

Demonstration tours and workshops

Goal is to keep land in active pasture



## HABITAT OFFSET FUNDS

- ❑ Remove invading shrubs and trees
- ❑ Fence some areas for late cattle access
- ❑ Delay haying
- ❑ Barn swallow nest structures



## HABITAT BEFORE AND AFTER

1 BOBOLINK PAIR

7 BOBOLINK PAIRS



## USING SMALL OFFSETS TO CREATE LARGE HABITATS

- ▣ Habitat offset (SARBEX) agreements
- ▣ Efficiencies in habitat restoration, monitoring



## CHALLENGES

- ▣ ESA policies and protected area policies
- ▣ Building trust with farmers
- ▣ Complexity of large habitat offset projects
- ▣ \$\$ for ongoing staff



BUT THE RESULTS ARE WORTH  
THE CHALLENGES!

Thank you