



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



M. SCOTT BOWEN
DIRECTOR

March 19, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section

Dear Grant Reviewers:

SUBJECT: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Office of Public Lands supports the Brownstown Township's effort to apply for grant funding for the 440-acre Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027.

At nearly one square-mile, Sibley Prairie is part of the biggest lakeplain prairie and savanna complex remaining in Michigan, both critically imperiled natural communities with less than 1% of the original extent remaining. Based on recorded occurrences maintained by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI), the Sibley Prairie complex and vicinity supports at least one Michigan Endangered, six Michigan Threatened, and 16 Michigan Special Concern plant and animal species. In addition, based on the plant community complex in general, many more rare species are possible, including the following:

U.S. Endangered: Karner blue butterfly, northern long-eared bat, and Indiana bat.

U.S. Threatened: monarch butterfly (proposed U.S. Threatened), prairie white-fringed orchid, and eastern massasauga rattlesnake.

Michigan Endangered: Gattinger's gerardia, Skinner's gerardia, short-eared owl, Henslow's sparrow, round-seed panic grass, lambda snaggletooth snail, downy gentian, prairie vole, Indiana bat, prairie white-fringed orchid, black cottonwood, king rail, few-flowered nut-rush, and barn owl.

Michigan Threatened: tall green milkweed, purple milkweed, Sullivant's milkweed, panicled screwstem, Missouri rock-cress, fescue sedge, spotted turtle, least shrew, white lady slipper, Persius duskywing butterfly, upland boneset, tinted spurge, Dukes' skipper butterfly, leafhopper, pumpkin ash, downy sunflower, panicled hawkweed, short-fruited rush, Vasey's rush, woodland lettuce, least pinweed, Leggett's pinweed, Virginia flax, northern prostrate clubmoss, wing-stemmed monkey-flower, eastern fox snake, Culver's root borer, silphium borer moth, Karner blue butterfly, sand cinquefoil, Maryland meadow-beauty, netted nut-rush, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, Atlantic blue-eyed-grass, eastern box turtle, and Virginia spiderwort.

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The proposed 440-acre Sibley Prairie is located less than half of a mile east of the 52-acre Brownstown Prairie State Wildlife Area. The acquisition and protection of the Sibley Prairie property would not only maintain the sustainability of the area but also enhance the Wildlife Area by providing additional recreation and hunting land in the nearby vicinity.

Sibley Prairie is one of the few remaining natural areas bordering metro Detroit with a large, sustainable, and diverse natural community complex. The area is composed of critically imperiled plant communities with habitat for many rare species found in few other parts of the State. The Sibley Prairie area provides many vital ecosystem services and a great opportunity for much-needed outdoor recreation land in the Detroit and Downriver area.

We fully support the proposed Sibley Prairie acquisition. If you have additional questions regarding this grant application, you may contact me at 989-387-8189 or mohneyp@michigan.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Mohny', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patrick Mohny
Senior Lands Program Manager
Office of Public Lands, Executive Division
989-387-8189



Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909
March 17, 2026

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition TF 26-0027

Dear MNRTF Review Committee:

On behalf of Detroit Bird Alliance, I strongly encourage approval of Brownstown Township's grant application to facilitate the purchase of Sibley Prairie in Wayne County. Sibley Prairie is a rare lakeplain prairie habitat that is home to a wide variety of species. In this time of biodiversity crisis, deploying Trust Fund money to protect Sibley Prairie would be a wise investment that could help sustain vulnerable species populations for generations to come.

As part of the coalition of conservation organizations participating in the Save Sibley Prairie campaign, Detroit Bird Alliance has seen widespread support for protecting Sibley Prairie, including from members of the public, the media, and the Brownstown Township Trustees. Since Sibley Prairie is located in populous Wayne County, it would provide an opportunity for many people to enjoy nature, while at the same time safeguarding habitat for so many species.

Detroit Bird Alliance is also working in Wayne County with the City of Detroit to restore habitat for local birds. Adding Sibley Prairie to the Wayne County conservation portfolio would be a boon to migrating birds, as we work to build a robust wildlife corridor in Southeast Michigan.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Cheklich".

Diane Cheklich
Detroit Bird Alliance
Board Member, Conservation Committee Chair

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30245
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom It May Concern:

This is a letter of support for a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to purchase 440 acres of the Sibley Prairie. The Southern Michigan Daylily Society recognizes that the Sibley Prairie is a vital resource for the existence of thousands of Michigan native bees that pollinate 80% of crops and maintain the natural environment.

There are 460 species of native bees in Michigan. The honey bee is not native and was brought to the US by early colonist. The honey bee is a human managed insect. It is the native bees that do most of the pollination and have been doing it for thousands of years. The population of the native bees has been declining and most rapidly the past 30 years from loss of habitat and insecticides. Populations are down an average of 20-30 % and some species have already become extinct.

The native bees are a keystone species for the survival of our ecosystems. Flowers must be pollinated in order to produce seeds for the next generation. No pollination, no seeds and eventual ecosystem collapse.

The Sibley Prairie is a vital habitat to support native bees and a good investment for supporting the health and existence of our ecosystems.

I also personally support the saving of the Sibley Prairie as I am a retired Biology Professor and am aware of the important role the Sibley Prairie has in supporting the existence of the native bees which are dangerously declining in population.

Sincerely yours,
Marietta Crabtree, Director
Southern Michigan Daylily Society
586-612-1848
3677 Cottontail Lane, Shelby Twp., MI 48316
Marietta.crabtree@gmail.com
March 14, 2026

March 12, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board:

On behalf of The Green Ribbon Initiative and Metroparks Toledo in Ohio, I write to express our full support for the protection of the 440-acre Sibley Prairie property, currently owned by Fritz Enterprises Inc.

The Green Ribbon Initiative is a coalition of partners in Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan dedicated to preserving and protecting the Oak Openings Region, which extends across approximately 1300 square miles of our two states. The Oak Openings Region contains five globally-rare natural communities and is home to >125 species listed as either endangered, threatened, or species of conservation concern at the federal or state level. The Sibley Prairie is located within this unique region and is home to two of those five rare natural communities. Unfortunately, most of this unique ecosystem has been converted to residential or commercial development or to agricultural land use. Within Ohio, Metroparks Toledo protects several thousand acres of this ecoregion so we can attest to the critical importance of these natural areas to both humans and wildlife in a landscape surrounded by agriculture and urbanization. Furthermore, The Green Ribbon Initiative science committee has recently developed habitat models for the entire Oak Openings Region based on unique indicator species, and these models have identified the large Sibley Prairie property as one of high conservation importance for the region.

The Sibley Prairie contains one of the largest remaining remnants of lakeplain prairie and lakeplain oak openings in Michigan. These globally-imperiled natural communities harbor high levels of plant and animal diversity. They also provide important ecosystem functions, including stormwater storage and filtration. In turn, these ecosystem functions improve water quality, reduce harmful algal blooms, and improve wetland habitat quality. Lakeplain prairies and oak openings in Southeast Michigan are an important stopover site for migrating birds. In addition, permanent protection of the Sibley Prairie will be an important piece of the puzzle for maintaining a contiguous natural corridor for wildlife spanning the boundary between Southeast Michigan and Northwest Ohio.

Protecting the Sibley Prairie will ensure that unique and critical natural communities in Southeast Michigan will continue to benefit people and nature.

We encourage the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board to fund this proposal.

Sincerely,



Jay Wright, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, Green Ribbon Initiative
Director of Conservation Science
Metroparks Toledo
4909 Jerome Rd., Maumee OH 43537
Jay.wright@metroparkstoledo.com
419-309-0474



Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Black to the Land Coalition, we write in strong support of the effort to protect and preserve Sibley Prairie as an ecologically significant and culturally meaningful landscape.

Prairies are among the most imperiled ecosystems in North America, yet they play a critical role in carbon sequestration, water filtration, pollinator support, and soil health. Working class and urban communities deserve access to high quality ecosystems. The protection of Sibley Prairie represents a commitment to safeguarding these essential ecological functions for present and future generations.

For BIPOC communities and other historically marginalized peoples, access to and relationship with land has too often been shaped by dispossession, exclusion, and environmental harm. Black to the Land Coalition works to reconnect Black people with land stewardship, food sovereignty, conservation, and outdoor spaces as a pathway toward healing, empowerment, and environmental justice. As an organization centered in Detroit, Wayne County, we see tremendous value in ensuring this land is protected. In Wayne County—one of Michigan's most populous, predominantly working-class, home to over 1.7 million residents and among the most racially and ethnically diverse counties—the protection of a rare lakeplain prairie like Sibley ensures that high quality ecosystems are not reserved only for affluent communities, but remain accessible to the people most impacted by environmental loss. Preserving places like Sibley Prairie ensures that conservation is not only about protecting nature, but also about expanding who belongs in and benefits from these landscapes.

While a handful of prairie remnants persist in Wayne County, Sibley Prairie is unique for its continuity as an open landscape—having survived waves of agriculture, industrialization, and suburban development that erased most native prairies from the county. **Over 99% of lakeplain prairies have been destroyed.** Sibley Prairie is the largest *and highest-quality remnant of historic lakeplain prairie in the state, specific to clay-rich lakebeds left behind by the prehistoric Great Lakes (like Lake Erie and Lake Maumee).*

We believe Sibley Prairie holds tremendous potential as a site for education, community engagement, and intergenerational learning rooted in respect for Indigenous land histories, ecological knowledge, and inclusive stewardship practices. Its protection aligns with broader goals of equitable conservation, climate adaptation, and the shared responsibility to care for land in ways that honor both people and place.

We urge decision-makers, partners, and community stakeholders to take decisive action to save Sibley Prairie and ensure it remains protected from development and degradation. Doing so affirms a vision of conservation that is inclusive, forward-thinking, and grounded in long-term ecological and social well-being.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. We are grateful for the opportunity to stand in support of this vital effort.

In solidarity and stewardship,

Antonio R. Cosme
On behalf of the Black to the Land Coalition
Program Lead

Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance



Matthew Spoor, President
PO Box 130923
Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0923
President@WashtenawBNA.org
www.WashtenawBNA.org

March 11, 2026
Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909
Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

The Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance (WBNA) is an active chapter of Michigan Audubon, formed in the early 1950's. While our membership is concentrated in Washtenaw County, we have many members in surrounding counties in southeast Michigan. Our mission is to promote the conservation of wildlife and natural beauty in all possible ways, with a particular focus on birds; to cooperate with other organizations whose aims correspond to those of this corporation; and to develop and maintain a conservation program for the youth and adults of the community.

We write today to express our strong support for Brownstown Township's application for a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to purchase 440 acres of the Sibley Prairie, the largest remaining lakeplain prairie in the State of Michigan.

Once widespread in Michigan, lakeplain prairie is a landscape found almost nowhere else on earth. The Michigan Natural Features Inventory notes that "there has been extensive loss and degradation of lakeplain wet prairies due to conversion to agriculture, residential and industrial development, alterations of groundwater hydrology, and fire suppression. It is estimated that less than 1% of the original community remains. Therefore, protection and restoration of existing prairie remnants is a top conservation priority."

Lakeplain prairies host dozens of rare and endangered plants, along with an array of threatened animals, including key grassland birds like the Henslow's Sparrow, the Dicksissel, the Grasshopper Sparrow, and the Short-Eared Owl.

For all these reasons, preservation of the Sibley Prairie is a top priority for conservation in SE Michigan, and the Washtenaw Bird and Nature Alliance is pleased to strongly endorse Brownstown Township's application for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to help with the purchase and protection of the Sibley Prairie.

Best regards,

Conservation Chair, Washtenaw Bird and Nature Alliance



Downriver Linked Greenways
20600 Eureka Rd., Suite 250
Taylor, MI 48180

February 5, 2026

Save Sibley Prairie Coalition
Michigan Land Conservancy
10325 Cherry Hill Rd.
Superior Township, MI 48198

Dear Save Sibley Prairie Coalition,

On behalf of Downriver Linked Greenways, I am writing to express our strong support for your efforts to protect the 440-acre Fritz Enterprises Inc. tract at Sibley Road Prairie. This property is an incredibly important natural resource for Brownstown Township, Wayne County, and the Downriver region.

Sibley Road Prairie is the largest remaining example of lakeplain prairie in Michigan. While this type of landscape once covered much of southeast Michigan, very little remains today. The Fritz tract is the most intact and significant portion of this prairie, and protecting it is essential to maintaining what is left of this rare ecosystem.

Lakeplain prairies support a wide range of plant and insect species, many of which are now rare or declining. They also provide important benefits such as water storage, water filtration, and improved air quality. As wetland systems, they play a role in flood mitigation and climate resilience, while also offering opportunities for people to experience a unique natural landscape close to home.

Sibley Road Prairie is also an important site for migratory birds, serving as one of the most significant inland stopover areas in Wayne County. Its size and quality make it a refuge for wildlife and a source of native species that can support conservation and restoration efforts throughout the region.

Downriver Linked Greenways has a direct interest in this project as it includes plans to expand the regional bike trail along the property. Our organization focuses on connecting Downriver communities through trails that provide safe transportation and access to outdoor spaces. The opportunity to connect residents to a rare prairie landscape like Sibley Road Prairie would be a high priority for our organization. Protecting this land now ensures that future trail connections can be planned thoughtfully, in a way that respects and preserves the natural character of the site.

We fully support the Save Sibley Prairie Coalition's efforts to permanently protect the Fritz tract and appreciate the collaborative work being done to make this possible. Thank you for the opportunity to support this important project.

Sincerely,

Eric Antolak
Trail Program Manager
Downriver Linked Greenways

March 6, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

Grants Management Section

P.O. Box 30425

Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

As a representative of the Garden Club of Greater Lansing, I'm writing to show our support for preserving Sibley Prairie. It's the largest and highest quality lake plain prairie remaining in our state. Furthermore, Michigan Natural Features inventory has estimated that only 1% of these unique areas remain.

It hosts over a dozen rare plants, songbirds, frogs, and bats. In addition to providing habitat for plants and animals, it reduces area flooding. Losing it to development would be tragic. We therefore urge the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board to support the acquisition of this acreage and preserve it for future generations...of people, animals, and plants. Thank you for considering this grant request.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Sue Sulzdorf

2323 Boston Blvd, Lansing, MI 48910

Representing the Garden Club of Greater Lansing



WAYNE COUNTY
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT

Wayne County Conservation District

c/o 28 McKinley Place, Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236

Office Telephone: (313) 418-0700

E-mail: cboris4@gmail.com (preferred) or waynecdmi@gmail.com

Web Site: www.waynecdmi.org

March 8, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027, Brownstown Township, Wayne County, MI

Dear MNRTF Board of Trustees:

The Wayne County Conservation District strongly supports Brownstown Charter Township's grant request seeking funding to acquire the largest, highest-quality parcel of lakeplain prairie remaining in the entire state.

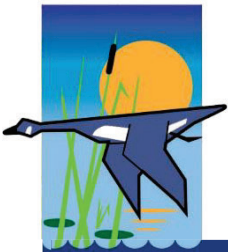
As a governmental participant in the Save Sibley Prairie Coalition, we commend the tremendous partnership which is working to protect and restore the Sibley Prairie complex—one of Michigan's most ecologically significant landscapes. The proposed acquisition of 440 acres will help preserve critical lakeplain prairie habitat, support rare and threatened species, enhance the region's ecological resilience, and introduce Wayne County residents and their children to what Michigan's biodiverse landscape looked like in the 1800s.

The Wayne County Conservation District fully supports this important project and looks forward to continued collaboration with the Coalition partners to ensure the long-term protection and stewardship of the Sibley Prairie.

Sincerely,

Connie Boris

Connie Boris, Ph.D., Executive Director
Wayne County Conservation District



INTERNATIONAL
WILDLIFE
REFUGE ALLIANCE

5437 W. JEFFERSON AVE.
TRENTON, MI 48183

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(734) 249-8558 office
iwra_naturestore@yahoo.com

March 11, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
PO Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance is the friends organization for Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in Trenton, MI. While the Sibley Prairie is outside of Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge's acquisition boundary, we recognize the Sibley Prairie's significance to Southeast Michigan's ecosystems and habitat and strongly support efforts to keep it protected.

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance strongly supports Brownstown Township's application to receive a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund in order to purchase and protect Sibley Prairie.

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization (#20-3318708) dedicated to helping the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service deliver the mission of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, North America's first international wildlife refuge – working through partnerships to protect, conserve, and manage the Refuge's wildlife and habitats; and to create exceptional conservation, recreational, and educational experiences to develop the next generation of conservation stewards, thanks to you and your continued support!

Thank you for your consideration,

Nicole LaFleur

Nicole LaFleur, Executive Director

International Wildlife Refuge Alliance
5437 W. Jefferson
Trenton, MI 48183
734-362-3735

March 10, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909
Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom It May Concern:

Urgent Request to Protect 440-acres of the Sibley Prairie

I am the president of North Oakland Wild Ones, a Michigan chapter of a national organization, Wild Ones Native Landscapers with more than 13,000 members concerned with saving biodiversity. Our local SE Michigan chapter, one of 13 chapters located across Michigan, advocates for the preservation of irreplaceable habitat for threatened and endangered native species.

Grassland habitat is extremely rare in our area and worldwide, and its benefits to climate and wildlife are undeniable. This rare and irreplaceable property—Michigan's largest and highest-quality lakeplain prairie remnant, once lost to development, will be gone forever.

Beyond biodiversity, Sibley Prairie provides critical green infrastructure—mitigating climate change impacts, protecting water quality, and reducing flood risks in Southeast Michigan. Located within the acquisition boundaries of the Brownstown Prairie State Wildlife Area, adding this property would expand it from approximately 50 acres to 500 acres and provide much-needed public hunting, birdwatching, and recreation opportunities for metro Detroit residents.

On behalf of North Oakland Wild Ones, I am writing with great urgency to express our support in protecting the 440 acres of Sibley Prairie in Brownstown Township, Wayne County. We are a part of broad-based support community across Michigan and from 35 states, Washington, D.C. and Ontario.

We strongly support Brownstown Charter Township's grant application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for the acquisition of 440 acres of Sibley Prairie. We applaud the township's commitment to conservation.

Sincerely,

Jane Giblin
President, North Oakland Wild Ones
northoaklandwildones@gmail.com

Connecting people and native plants for a healthy planet

Website: <https://northoakland.wildones.org/>

March 10, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909



Oak Openings Region Conservancy
P.O. Box 183, Holland, OH

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

The board of Oak Openings Region Conservancy (OORC), fully supports Brownstown Township's application to acquire Sibley Prairie.

Sibley Prairie is the highest-quality lakeplain prairie remaining in Michigan, a landscape that once stretched for thousands of acres along the Detroit River and Lake Erie. Today, only fragments remain, making this acquisition effort especially urgent. Preserving these lands will protect rare prairie species and safeguard a rich mosaic of wetlands, forests, and wildlife habitat.

Sibley Prairie is a remarkable example of Michigan's lakeplain prairie ecosystem. OORC supports saving the prairie and avoiding its potential sale and the long-term implications of development on such a rare and irreplaceable site. This is Michigan's largest and highest-quality lakeplain prairie remnant—and it is at risk of being lost forever. This may be our last chance to save it. At 440 acres, this is one of the largest remaining natural properties in southeast Michigan, with a rich mix of prairie, forest, and wetland. This land lies within the Brownstown Prairie State Wildlife Area—the only State Wildlife Area in Wayne County—and has long been a DNR conservation goal. Protecting this land would expand the Wildlife Area to nearly 500 acres, offering more opportunities for hunting, birdwatching, and outdoor recreation in metro Detroit.

Recognized by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory as the highest-quality lakeplain prairie remnant in the state, Sibley Prairie supports 15 rare plant species and the state-threatened Duke's skipper butterfly. This land acts as vital green infrastructure, helping to mitigate climate change, reduce flood risk, and protect water quality. Safeguarding this site aligns with the DNR's goals to expand public land and outdoor access near population centers—critically important in Wayne County, Michigan's most populous. Several conservation partners are ready to support stewardship of this property, but first, we must secure the land. If sold to developers, this unique natural treasure could be lost forever!

Sincerely,

The Board of Oak Openings Region Conservancy

March 10, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

The Friends of the Rouge is a proud partner in the Save Sibley Prairie Coalition and strongly supports funding for the acquisition and permanent protection of the 440 acres within the Sibley Prairie complex through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

This project is a once in a lifetime opportunity to preserve the state's largest and highest quality lakeplain prairie remnant before it is lost forever to development. The property includes 158 acres of high-quality wetlands that store and filter water flowing into the Detroit River and Lake Erie, critical to the health of these watersheds. Although Sibley Prairie lies outside the Rouge River watershed, Friends of the Rouge recognizes the regional importance of protecting these rare lakeplain prairie and wetland ecosystems, which play a vital role in maintaining the health and resilience of southeast Michigan's interconnected environment.

We commend the Save Sibley Prairie Coalition for its leadership in advancing this important conservation effort and offer our full support for funding through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Sincerely,



Ashley Flintoff
Executive Director

March 6, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

Grants Management Section

P.O. Box 30425

Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

The Southeast Michigan Butterfly Association (SEMBA) is a group of 84 Wayne County residents who wholly support the efforts to Save Sibley Prairie.

The acquisition of these 440 acres of lakeplain prairie is a vital asset to protect for future generations. This property is extraordinarily rare and represents some of the best remaining lakeplain prairie anywhere in the world. It boasts multiple species of protected flora and state of Michigan endangered insects. We, the residents of Michigan, need to protect this rare treasure and most endangered ecosystem in North America.

This lakeplain prairie is a rare type of tallgrass prairie that will help mitigate the effects of climate change, protect water quality, and reduce flood risks, a growing concern of many southeast Michigan residents. There is a deficit of green space in Wayne County. For every dollar invested in green space, it will reduce health care cost by three dollars. Protecting new recreational opportunities will help ensure that residents have access to nature, supporting health, equity and quality of life. This is a one-time opportunity to deliver lasting public benefit where it is needed most in the State of Michigan.

A key part of SEMBA's mission is to support habitats for butterflies and moths. We work with individual and local groups to develop natural habitats for lepidoptera through education and community butterfly garden grants. Maintaining the Sibley Prairie Complex as a natural lakeplain would be a great extension of this habitat support.

Sincerely,

The SEMBA Board and Membership

Joanne Schwab, President; Burt Sloan, Vice President; Lisa Northey, Secretary; Rebecca Thomason, Treasurer; Bill Beauregard, Program Director; Cheryl Furlong, Membership

11 March 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909
RE: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to express strong support for Brownstown Charter Township's application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for the acquisition of approximately 440 acres of Sibley Prairie. Protecting this landscape represents a rare and significant opportunity to conserve one of Michigan's remaining lake prairie ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations.

Sibley Prairie provides valuable ecological, educational, and recreational benefits. Native prairies are among the most threatened ecosystems in the state, and preserving this property would safeguard important habitat for native plants, pollinators, and wildlife while maintaining the natural heritage of southeastern Michigan. In addition, permanent protection of the site would create opportunities for environmental education, passive recreation, and community engagement with Michigan's natural landscapes.

A grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund would ensure that this remarkable landscape is permanently protected and managed for conservation and public benefit. The partnership between Brownstown Charter Township and the Save Sibley Prairie Coalition demonstrates strong community commitment to preserving this unique natural resource.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project and for your continued leadership in protecting Michigan's natural resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carolyn J. Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish above the 'i' in Miller.

Carolyn J. Miller
President, Wildflower Association of Michigan



Promoting native landscapes through education, advocacy, and collaborative action

March 10, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Letter of Support, Sibley Prairie Acquisition - Ann Arbor Area Wild Ones

To Whom It May Concern:

I write on behalf of Ann Arbor Area Wild Ones, a volunteer organization promoting native plants. We are a southeast Michigan chapter of the national non-profit Wild Ones organization, with which we share a mission: to promote the use of native plants in all landscapes through education, collaboration, and advocacy. With this mission, we support the Brownstown Township application for funds that will make the purchase of Sibley Prairie feasible, so that the Prairie's preservation can be protected. Our support is backed by our 227 members, located throughout the Huron River watershed area and including members in Wayne County.

Sibley Prairie is currently privately owned, and will be sold. Substantial funds are needed to allow its purchase, and thereby its preservation. Otherwise, this rare and important ecosystem will surely be forever lost to development, or agriculture, or both.

As you know, Sibley Prairie is a rare and fragile lakeplain prairie environment. The Prairie's ecosystem is old, biodiverse, and sustainable. It provides a unique and sustained habitat for as many as 200 different species, some rare, threatened, or endangered, including *Asclepias hirtella*, Duke's skipper butterfly, the American bumble bee, and the prairie fringed orchid, among others. (See, e.g., <https://bridgemi.com/outdoors-life/groups-running-out-of-time-to-raise-millions-to-save-unique-michigan-prairie/#:~:text=Sibley%20Prairie%20is%20home%20to,Courtesy%20of%20Jesse%20Lincoln>) The Prairie ecosystem also contributes to clean air, clean water, climate mitigation, improved human health and welfare, and plant and animal habitat.

We are sure the case has been made to you already that the Sibley Prairie Nature Preserve is a unique 440-acre ecosystem, and is the largest and highest quality lakeplain prairie remnant remaining in Michigan. The Prairie's Floristic Quality Index is a whopping 69.95; it represents (per the Michigan Natural Features Inventory) the remaining 1% of lakeplain prairie environments that were once common in Berrien County by Lake Michigan, and along the shores of Lake Huron from Saginaw Bay to Monroe County.

Human health and welfare also benefit from access to this beautiful and restorative place. Sibley is an easy drive from Detroit and its greater metropolitan area. A growing body of research consistently demonstrates that exposure to natural places improves physical, emotional, and mental health in people, including by reducing stress, improving cognitive function and mood, and lowering the risk of chronic disease. See e.g.,

<https://www.who.int/europe/activities/improving-health-and-well-being-through-nature>

So much history, biodiversity, sustainability, and respite for humans deserves preservation. Ann Arbor Area Wild Ones' commitment to this cause is reflected in the prominent display, titled "CALL TO ACTION! Save Sibley Prairie" on our website homepage, <https://annarborarea.wildones.org/>. Overall, more than a half-million dollars have been contributed to date by approximately 900 donors, mostly individuals and small organizations. This grassroots giving reflects broad support for protecting this precious landscape. It is clear, of course, that a much larger sum must be raised this year in order to meet the market-price purchase opportunity given by the owners to those who would preserve the Prairie. Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund can provide vital and substantial financial support toward this land purchase, fully consistent with your mission. Michiganders support this, and you are our agent to make this purchase a reality. Please say yes to Brownstown Township's request for funds.

Yours truly,

Marta

Marta Manildi
Director and Advocacy Chair
Ann Arbor Area Wild Ones



March 10, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

Grants Management Section

P.O. Box 30425

Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

The Audubon Society of Kalamazoo would like to extend support for Brownstown Township's application to purchase the 440-acre Sibley Prairie. Sibley Prairie is a rare gem that contains the highest quality lakeplain prairie in the State of Michigan, as identified by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory. This property is home to numerous endangered plants as well as the state-endangered American bumblebee. Sibley Prairie serves as an important green space within southeast Michigan's urban landscape, giving people much-needed access to nature.

We are grateful for the opportunity to support Brownstown Township and this important natural area.

Respectfully,

Gail Walter

Vice President, Audubon Society of Kalamazoo

March 11, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern,

I'm writing on behalf of "Plant It Wild" to urge you to approve the grant requested by Brownstown Charter Township to preserve the 440 acres known as the Sibley Prairie. "Plant It Wild" is an independent, non-profit based in Benzie and Manistee counties that advocates for the importance of native plants to healthy ecosystems.

Sibley Prairie represents the largest remaining lakeplain prairie in the state and contains a number of rare plants. As a prairie ecosystem it offers habitat for pollinators, birds and other wildlife. The deep, rooted prairie plants help to manage runoff, reduce flooding and filter pollutants. The continued presence of this large and relatively undisturbed lakeplain prairie in the Detroit metro area will make it possible for visitors to experience the beauty and vibrancy of this unique ecosystem firsthand. Please award this grant so this truly unique area can be preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

Andrea Walworth

Secretary, Plant It Wild
Frankfort, MI



March 13, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom It May Concern:

The Red Cedar Chapter of Wild Ones recognizes the value of natural prairie for pollinators, wildlife and public education. Our chapter as well as individual members have made donations to help. Since so few traces of natural prairie remain we encourage you to take all necessary steps to preserve this one. Once it is lost to development, it's gone.

Perl Bianchi,
President, Wild Ones - Red Cedar Chapter



March 13th, 2026

Support MNRTF Application for Preserving Sibley Prairie, Brownstown Township, Wayne County (MI)

The Southeast Michigan Group of the Sierra Club strongly supports the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund application by Brownstown Township to acquire 440 acres within the Sibley Prairie complex. This project will protect a rare lakeplain prairie and wetland ecosystem of statewide significance while improving water quality, enhancing biodiversity, and strengthening climate resilience in the Detroit River watershed.

With more than 12,000 members and supporters across Metro Detroit, the Sierra Club has a longstanding commitment to expanding outdoor recreation and environmental education opportunities for underserved metropolitan areas. Our Wildlife and Wildlands Committee engages in advocacy, public education, and grassroots action to help protect, preserve, and restore Michigan's native wildlife and wildlands. Restoring and protecting Sibley Prairie will not only provide accessible nature experiences close to home but also help mitigate the effects of climate change by preserving carbon-sequestering habitats and improving ecological connectivity.

We commend Brownstown Township, the Michigan Land Conservancy and its partners in the Save Sibley Prairie Coalition for their leadership and urge your full support of this proposal. We are proud to be part of the local coalition working to save this important natural area.

Ken Jacobsen
Wildlands & Wildlife Committee Chair
Sierra Club, Southeast Michigan Group



March 12, 2026

**Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909**

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy based in Grosse Ile Michigan. Our members consist of over 190 households on Grosse Ile. Our organization is in full support of the effort to save this ecologically valuable parcel. The prairie, woods, and wetlands in this 440-acre parcel represent the most important land protection opportunity that currently exists in the State of Michigan. With over 99% of the original lake plain prairie habitat already destroyed it is critical that we act now to preserve this area for the rare plants, birds and animals that utilize this critical habitat for their survival.

In addition, this parcel would provide public access to a natural area for residents of southeast Michigan who currently have limited opportunities in this region due to over development. This property would also provide mitigating benefits regarding flooding impacts during heavy rains and climate change.

To prevent the Sibley Prairie parcel from being developed and to protect the flora and fauna that live there as well as improving the quality of life for southeast Michigan residents we strongly support the purchase of this property via a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter!

Sincerely,

Douglas P. Thiel
Chairperson, Land Acquisition
Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy



March 15, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund – Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Subject: Lincoln Bowmen Archery Club Endorsement of Sibley Prairie Acquisition TF26-0027

On behalf of the Lincoln Bowmen Archery Club, we are writing to formally endorse the permanent preservation of the 440-acre Sibley Prairie tract in Brownstown Township.

As a neighbor to this land, we believe its protection is a matter of community safety and local pride for all Wayne County residents. Beyond its ecological rarity, this prairie serves as vital green infrastructure. Its vast wetlands are critical for flood prevention and water filtration, protecting the properties and water quality of our fellow citizens in a region increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather.

Preserving this land also secures an invaluable recreational asset. By expanding the local wildlife area to nearly 500 acres, we ensure that hunting, birdwatching, and outdoor traditions remain accessible right here in our own backyard. For Lincoln Bowmen, a club dedicated to outdoor heritage, this is an investment in the health and spirit of our community.

We urge all stakeholders to support the \$6 million fundraising goal before the 2026 deadline to ensure this natural defense and community treasure is not lost to development.

Sincerely,

Karl Kostrzewa, Vice Chairperson
Lincoln Bowmen Archery Club

Board of Directors

Jim Aimar
President

Karl Kostrzewa
Vice President

Scott Rhind
Treasurer

Tom Sikina
Secretary

Steve Adams
Director

John Bordine
Director

Greg Borrego
Director

Colleen Cucumano
Director

Ron Gibbs
Director

Dave Turnwald
Director

Brian Warneck
Director

Affiliations



*To foster and perpetuate the practice of all forms and styles of archery.
To conduct archery education, leagues, tournaments, and games for our members and guests.*

March 10, 2026
Anton A Reznicek
Curator Emeritus

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my great pleasure to write in support of the acquisition and protection of the Sibley Road Prairie tract. My interest in this area has been ongoing for a long time. I am an emeritus faculty member at the University of Michigan with interests in several topics, including the Michigan Flora. I am co-author of the “Field Manual of Michigan Flora,” manage the Michigan Flora online web resource (<https://michiganflora.net/>), and am a past president of the Michigan Botanical Society. I have a strong interest in Michigan rare plants and their conservation, and am currently chair of the Technical Advisory Committee for plants under the Endangered Species Program of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

This unique opportunity to protect this site offers the State of Michigan a rare chance to fill an important gap in Michigan’s protected Natural areas – an exemplary tract of Lakeplain Prairie. Many years ago, I was working with the Science writer of the Detroit News, who, among other things, was interested in what was happening to the vacant land in Detroit after removal of buildings, and what the original vegetation might have been. I was somewhat embarrassed at the time that I had to tell him we needed to cross the border into Canada, to visit the Ojibway Prairie Nature Reserve to see a protected, high quality, example of Lakeplain Prairie. It should be important to everyone in Michigan that we not have to visit another country to see a high quality example of our Natural Heritage.

Lakeplain Prairie was documented even by the earliest visitors to the state, and also represents a cultural connection to Native American Land Management before European settlement. To emphasize the rare vegetation type this represents, the work by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (A Survey of Lakeplain Prairie in Michigan by Comer et al., 1995) places this tract in context, noting the rarity of Lakeplain Prairie and

identifying this site as the largest, most intact, and most diverse tract remaining in southeast Michigan. It is especially gratifying that it is now possible to protect this site.

As background to discussing the quality and diversity of the Sibley Road Prairie tract, I have visited this tract a number of times (with permission), beginning in 1991, and extending through the early 2000's, often in conjunction with botanists and ecologists from the Michigan Natural Features Inventory. In the course of these visits, I have collected over 30 plant specimens as scientific documentation of the diversity of the site, including most of the rare plants – nearly 15 species, a remarkable total for one site. I can highlight only a few. The tall green milkweed, *Asclepias hirtella*, is a particular specialty, listed as “Threatened” with the few remaining Michigan sites largely confined to Lakeplain Prairie. As expected for a prairie, grasses, sedges and rushes are well represented. The short-fruited rush, *Juncus brachycarpus* is an example of a threatened species totally confined to Lakeplain Prairie sites.

Beyond their rarity and their scientific value, prairies and associated savanna (areas of open grassland with scattered trees) have a deep connection to humanity. They are park-like, showy with flowering plants, and offer a compelling vision to visitors. Even in the early 1800's, the famous geologist and Detroit resident Bela Hubbard offered his observation of what he termed “openings”: “It resembles those exquisite pictures of park scenery, where the vision roams at will among the clumps of lofty oaks and over open glades, gemmed with flowers; while the distant woodland bounds the horizon.” Trails through prairies are very attractive, and the Sibley Prairie tract offers expansive opportunities for both recreation in an area with a large population center nearby, and education about a very important, but almost vanished part of Michigan's natural heritage.

I strongly support this application, as it represents a unique opportunity for natural resource protection and a great service to one of the more densely populated areas of Michigan.

With Best Regards,

Anton A. Reznicek, Ph.D.



Main Office
101 E. César E. Chávez Ave.
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(517) 316-0300

Upper Peninsula Office
220 W. Washington St., Ste. 330
Marquette, MI 49855
(906) 225-0399

nature.org/michigan
nature.org/greatlakes

March 11, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30405
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy - Michigan, I write to express our full support for the Brownstown Township's grant application to acquire and protect the 440-acre Fritz Enterprises Inc. tract. Sibley Road Prairie is, by far, the largest remnant of lakeplain prairie in Michigan, and the Fritz tract is the most important parcel within that remnant. The Nature Conservancy has recognized the importance of the Sibley Road Prairie for more than three decades, and this collaborative effort to protect the Fritz tract represents the best opportunity in all that time.

As the Michigan Natural Features Inventory has noted, lakeplain prairies once covered roughly 300,000 acres in southeast Michigan and the Saginaw Bay area, and less than one percent remains in restorable condition. While this ecosystem has been mostly converted to residential or agricultural land uses, the remaining natural portions harbor disproportionately important biodiversity including rare plants and insects and grasslands with extremely high floristic quality. They also serve important functions, including water storage and purification (many lakeplain prairies are seasonal or permanent wetlands), and air quality improvement, and the Sibley Road Prairie also offers the opportunity for the people of Brownstown Township and all of Michigan to enjoy a unique and beautiful natural area through planned public access.

At a landscape scale, these lakeplain prairie remnants are among the most important stopover sites for migrating landbirds. Inland of the Detroit River corridor, Sibley Road Prairie is the largest block of high quality landbird stopover habitat in all of Wayne County. Further, Sibley Road Prairie is a reservoir of native species that have become increasingly rare elsewhere, and with improved management these species can thrive and provide propagules for natural dispersal to other, smaller remnant and restored grasslands.

The Nature Conservancy's mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends, with a vision to create a world in which people and nature thrive. Protecting the Sibley Road Prairie will ensure that a unique and critical component of the nature of Southeast Michigan will continue to thrive and benefit people throughout Michigan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Helen Taylor".

Helen Taylor
State Director

March 10, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

I strongly support the acquisition of Sibley Prairie utilizing Michigan Trust Funds. I conducted surveys of Michigan's prairies as the lead ecologist for Michigan Natural Features Inventory from 1988 through 2004, and I conducted the original surveys of Sibley Prairie that resulted in the approval of the site for fee title acquisition by the Trust Fund in the 1990s, before the current owner was willing to sell the property.


When we published the 1995 report "A Survey of Lakeplain Prairie in Michigan," authored by Patrick Comer and other MNFI botanists and plant ecologists, Sibley Prairie was recognized as by far the largest intact remnant of prairie in Michigan, and that continues to be the case. Sibley prairie also provides habitat for three State Threatened and four State Special Concern plants, as well as a State Threatened butterfly. This number likely underestimates the number of rare species at the site, as the surveys were conducted over a short period of time, with no follow-up surveys. Follow-up surveys in lakeplain prairies typically result in additional rare-species finds due to the fluctuating water tables that characterize this prairie type. Similar prairie sites in Ohio and Indiana have proven to be habitat for rare crayfish species restricted to the Great Lakes region, but I know of no surveys for crayfish at Sibley Prairie to date. Large, relatively intact open habitats are also important as bird migration corridors. The site also contains many of the more common prairie plants that contribute both to the importance of lakeplain prairies for supporting a diverse prairie fauna, and to the recreational and aesthetic value of this prairie type.

Lakeplain prairie itself is recognized as one of the rarest plant communities in Michigan and in the entire Great Lakes region. Two of the other states with large areas of lakeplain prairie, Illinois with the Chicago Wilderness, and Ohio with the Toledo Metroparks, have demonstrated the strong local interest in the lakeplain prairie and associated lakeplain oak openings, where hundreds of local volunteers assist in maintaining and restoring the prairie/savanna habitat. Recreational use in these restored prairie and oak savanna habitats includes plant, bird, butterfly watching, as well as other fauna. In the past, Land Trust Funds had also been utilized to purchase parcels

for State Game Area hunting opportunities, but I'm not familiar with current size limitations in Michigan.

In summary, I think that Sibley Prairie remains one of Michigan's highest priorities for Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund acquisition in the entire state. Addition of high quality habitat in southern Lower Michigan is especially important, since large urban populations need learning and recreational sites within easy access.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D.A. Albert", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dennis A. Albert, PhD, Forest and Wetland Ecologist
Research Faculty, Oregon State University



The Michigan Botanical Society

michiganbotanicalsociety.org
michiganbotanicalsociety@gmail.com

March 6, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

Robert Ayotte
President

To Whom it May Concern:

Brad Slaughter
Vice President

The Michigan Botanical Society (MBS), founded in 1941, is a statewide organization devoted to the study, appreciation, and conservation of Michigan's native plants and natural communities. With five active chapters, our mission includes the conservation of all native plants and their home places, the education of the public to value and protect plant life, the support of botanical research, and the establishment of sanctuaries and natural areas that safeguard Michigan's botanical heritage.

Sheila Bourgoin
Corresponding Secretary

MBS strongly supports the effort to acquire and permanently protect 440 acres of property located in Brownstown Township, Wayne County referred to as Sibley Prairie. This project represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve Michigan's largest and highest-quality lakeplain prairie remnant—an ecosystem of exceptional rarity and ecological value. Less than 1% of this unique ecosystem remains in Michigan. Lakeplain prairie is described as being nearly extirpated from Michigan according to "A Field Guide to the Natural Communities of Michigan."

Carolyn Miller
Recording Secretary

Robert Kelly
Treasurer

Identified by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) publication, "A Survey of Lakeplain Prairie in Michigan" as the finest example of lakeplain prairie in the state, Sibley Prairie exhibits a Floristic Quality Index of 69.95 and supports at least 15 threatened or special concern plant species, along with rare fauna such as the state-threatened Duke's skipper butterfly. Protecting this landscape will conserve a remarkable diversity of native flora, including species emblematic of Michigan's natural heritage such as *Platanthera leucophaea* (Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid) and *Asclepias sullivantii* (Sullivant's Milkweed).

State threatened plant species identified by the MNFI study of Sibley Prairie include three-awned grass, tall green milkweed, short fruited rush, Vasey's rush, seedbox, appressed bog clubmoss and Clinton's bulrush.

State special concern species include hairy angelica, gentian-leaved St. John's wort, two flowered rush, cross-leaved milkwort, prairie rose, tooth-cup and tall nut rush. Beyond its botanical and ecological importance, the preservation of Sibley Prairie will advance opportunities for research, education, and community engagement. The site's accessibility within metropolitan Detroit provides an unparalleled setting for environmental learning and public enjoyment, offering students, researchers, and visitors a living classroom that demonstrates the beauty, resilience, and importance of Michigan's native ecosystems.

Conserving Native Plants and their Home Places

The Michigan Botanical Society

For these reasons, the Michigan Botanical Society enthusiastically endorses and supports the efforts to secure, restore, and steward Sibley Prairie in partnership with public and private agencies. We urge decision-makers and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board to act decisively to ensure that this extraordinary landscape is protected for the benefit of future generations.

Sincerely,

Jeff Vornhagen
Chair, Conservation Advocacy Committee, Michigan Botanical Society
Director-at-Large, Michigan Botanical Society
Ann Arbor, Michigan
Jvornhagen01@gmail.com
(734) 474-9653
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Thumb Land Conservancy

4975 Maple Valley Road, Marlette, Michigan 48453
810-346-2584 ❖ mail@ThumbLand.org ❖ ThumbLand.org

March 13, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

Dear Grant Reviewers:

If the public would like to experience what parts of the Detroit area were like before most of it was developed, Sibley Prairie is it; an irreplaceable natural heritage for us, future generations, and the many wonderful and increasingly rare species that occur in few other places of the world. Look at an aerial photograph and you'll see that Sibley Prairie is located in one of the largest patches of green remaining at the south edge of metro Detroit. At nearly one square mile, Sibley Prairie is part of the biggest lakeplain prairie and savanna complex remaining in Michigan, but only a small piece of its former approximately 25 square-mile area.

As the last glacier receded, meltwaters deposited vast flat expanses of deep clay around the margins of the early Great Lakes. As water levels dropped, large parts of the lakeplain clay were left covered by sandy soils; a mix of ancient beaches, dunes, and meltwater flow deposits in broad channels. This varied landscape of shallow sands over thick clay is where lakeplain prairie and lakeplain oak openings, or savannas, developed and thrived for millennia.

A shallow water table, perched on the underlying lakeplain clay, fluctuates seasonally and often in sync with the cyclic high and low water levels of the nearby Great Lakes. In dry low-water years, some plant species shift to lower, wetter ground. Prior to Euro-American settlement, the vegetation often burned during these drier times due to fires set by indigenous people in their effort to improve hunting conditions by favoring grasses and also culturally important food and fiber plants. In wetter high-water years, plant species sensitive to flooding shifted to higher ground while marsh and swamp expanded in the lower portions of the landscape. Before they were largely eliminated by trapping, beaver were responsible for flooding large portions of the relatively flat landscape. The varied landscape of flats, depressions, sand ridges, along with the wet and dry cycles of saturation and inundation followed by burning, resulted in a unique and dynamic complex of wet lakeplain prairie, shrub swamp, marsh, and

open flatwoods, with oak openings or savanna on adjacent low ridges; together, a rich and diverse collection of plant and animal species adapted to this habitat mosaic, many now quite rare.

So, what's in this lakeplain prairie complex? At first glance in the spring and early summer, you might see just a wet meadow of prairie grasses, sedges, and rushes. But in the late summer and early fall, the prairie turns into a diverse and colorful array of flowering forbs like blazing-star, gentians, mountain-mint, shrubby cinquefoil, goldenrods, milkweeds, coneflowers, lupine, lobelia, prairie dock, betony, colic root, coreopsis, ironweed, asters, and more. Attracted to all of these flowers, a plethora of butterflies, moths, bees, beetles, and other pollinating insects are busy at work across the prairie. Within the prairie are patches of shrub swamp full of buttonbush (a pollinator magnet), dogwood, willow, elderberry, swamp rose, hazelnut, and nannyberry among many other shrubs and a great variety of flowering herbs. Wet prairie and marsh occupy the lowest and wettest areas, full of bulrush, spike-rushes, rushes, sedges, cat-tail, bluejoint grass, and various forbs, with arrowhead, pondweed, water-celery, bladderwort, coontail, and water-lily in and around open water.

Sand ridges or knolls support oak-dominated savanna, known as oak openings, also covered by hickory, ash, sassafras, maple, cherry, serviceberry, hawthorn, dogwood, hazelnut, sumac, huckleberry, blueberry, sweetfern, bearberry, as well as forbs and grasses from the adjoining prairie. This prairie and savanna landscape was used by indigenous people for trails, settlements, and as a source of nuts, berries, and other food and fiber plants.

Included in the complex are the unique wet-mesic flatwoods of southeast Michigan, dominated by several species of oak, including Michigan Special Concern Shumard's oak, the uncommon shellbark hickory, Michigan Threatened pumpkin ash, and Michigan Endangered black cottonwood, with an understory of hornbeam, hop-hornbeam, prickly-ash, arrow-wood, spicebush, riverbank grape, poison ivy, and typically a sparse ground layer of woodland forbs and sedges.

Originally, lakeplain prairie covered very little of Michigan, totaling not quite 158,000 acres, or about 245 square miles; only about 0.4% of the land area of the entire state as estimated by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory using General Land Office notes from the first Michigan surveys in the 1800s. Most prairies in Michigan were first to be drained and cropped because the need for tree clearing was minimal and the ground was rich. Today, only about 1,250 acres of lakeplain prairie remains, or just 0.8% of the original acreage. In other words, 99.2% of the lakeplain prairie in Michigan has been

destroyed in roughly the past 200 years. As such, lakeplain prairie is considered critically imperiled in Michigan and essentially on a global basis. Is it not high time to protect every piece that remains?

Based on recorded occurrences maintained by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, the Sibley Prairie complex and vicinity supports at least one Michigan Endangered, six Michigan Threatened, and 16 Michigan Special Concern plant and animal species. In addition, based on the plant community complex in general, many more rare species are possible. In just the past 25 years, at least 18 rare species that could occur on or near Sibley Prairie have increased in priority from Special Concern to Threatened, or Threatened to Endangered, indicating the increasingly imperiled status of these species and the natural communities that provide habitat.

Over 200 native plant species are recorded from the Sibley Prairie complex, most depending on lakeplain prairie habitat and occurring in few other locations in Michigan. The Michigan Natural Features Inventory identified Sibley Prairie as the highest quality lakeplain prairie remnant of 53 surveyed in Michigan. The Floristic Quality Index of Sibley Prairie is nearly 70 on a scale of 0 to 100, with most natural areas in Michigan scoring between 20 and 40. Likewise, several uncommon and rare animal species are known from Sibley Prairie and the vicinity. Some are found only in a few locations in the southeast corner of the State, such as Michigan Threatened Duke's Skipper butterfly.

Rare and imperiled species that have either been observed and documented from Sibley Prairie or could occur there based on the plant communities, include the following:

US Endangered: Karner blue butterfly, northern long-eared bat, and Indiana bat.

US Threatened: monarch butterfly (proposed US Threatened), prairie white-fringed orchid, and eastern massasauga rattlesnake.

Michigan Endangered: Gattinger's gerardia, Skinner's gerardia, short-eared owl, Henslow's sparrow, round-seed panic grass, lambda snaggletooth snail, downy gentian, prairie vole, Indiana bat, prairie white-fringed orchid, black cottonwood, king rail, few-flowered nut-rush, and barn owl.

Michigan Threatened: tall green milkweed, purple milkweed, Sullivant's milkweed, panicled screwstem, Missouri rock-cress, fescue sedge, spotted turtle, least shrew, white lady slipper, Persius duskywing butterfly, upland boneset, tinted spurge, Dukes' skipper butterfly, leafhopper, pumpkin ash, downy sunflower, panicled hawkweed, short-fruited rush, Vasey's rush, woodland lettuce, least pinweed, Leggett's pinweed, Virginia flax, northern prostrate clubmoss, wing-stemmed monkey-flower, eastern fox

snake, Culver's root borer, silphium borer moth, Karner blue butterfly, sand cinquefoil, Maryland meadow-beauty, netted nut-rush, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, Atlantic blue-eyed-grass, eastern box turtle, and Virginia spiderwort.

Michigan Special Concern: grasshopper sparrow, hairy angelica, three-awned grass, Cooper's milk vetch, dusted skipper butterfly, American bittern, Richardson's sedge, northern harrier, leafhopper, Engelmann's spike-rush, Blanding's turtle, whiskered sunflower, gentian-leaved St. John's-wort, conobea, furrowed flax, northern appressed bog clubmoss, bog conehead katydid, red-faced meadow katydid, delicate meadow katydid, green desert grasshopper, blazing star borer, maritime sunflower borer, Wilson's phalarope, cross-leaved milkwort, Shumard's oak, meadow-beauty, tall beak-rush, tall nut-rush, prairie warbler, dickcissel, prairie dropseed, and willow aster.

Presumed Extirpated from Michigan: chestnut sedge, violet wood-sorrel, sand milkwort, honey-flowered Solomon-seal, and Farwell's blue-eyed-grass.

Sibley Prairie was even possibly the location of the last endemic bison of Michigan. The bison was shot at the corner of Sibley and Allen roads in Brownstown Township in 1882 by landowner J.G. Carson and the hide still hangs at the Flatrock Historical Museum.

One of the few remaining natural areas bordering metro Detroit; a large, sustainable, and diverse native community complex; critically imperiled plant communities; habitat for many rare plant and animal species; thousands of years of indigenous occupation and management by the local Wyandotte and possibly Pottawatomi tribes; extensive history of early Euro-American settlement; an abundance of vital ecosystem services provided; and opportunity for much-needed outdoor recreation land in the Detroit and Downriver area. If Sibley Prairie is not worth protecting, then we don't know what is.



William Collins, Executive Director
Thumb Land Conservancy



Kirtland's Warbler
by Jim Bull

James N. Bull

4136 Abbott, Lincoln Park, MI 48146-4020
313-928-2950 (land) 313-855-7894 (cell)
jimnbull@gmail.com

March 9, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

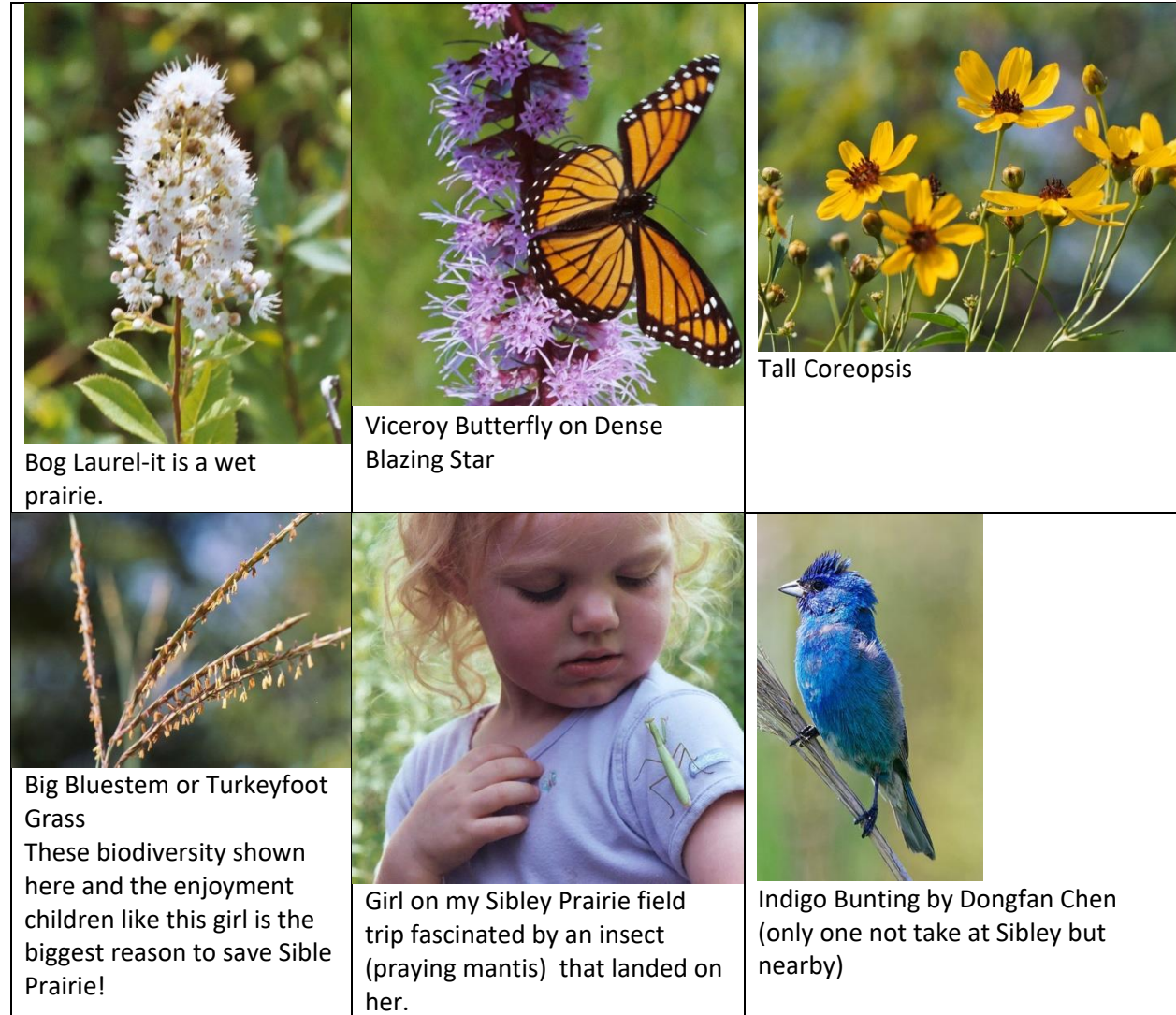
Dear MNRTF Review Committee,

I am pleased to express strong support for Brownstown Township's grant application to support purchasing 440 acres of Sibley Prairie for the benefit of this and future generations.

Sibley Prairie is a rare remnant of Michigan's once vast lakeplain prairie ecosystem and represents one of the most ecologically significant natural areas in the Great Lakes region. Beyond its botanical importance, this site provides vital stopover and nesting habitat for a wide array of migratory birds traveling along the Detroit River corridor—an internationally recognized segment of the intersection of the Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways. Like grassland insects including rare butterflies, and rare plants, grassland birds are in steep decline due to massive habitat loss. Protecting and restoring this landscape will enhance regional biodiversity, improve water quality, and strengthen the ecological network supporting birds and wildlife across Southeast Michigan.

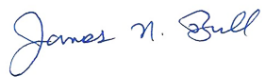
Access to this rare, beautiful, and amazing resource will be invaluable for the general public, but as a biology and environmental science professor it would also be great to be able to take my students to see this place where two centuries ago herds of American bison used to graze. I also lead more than twenty-three field trips a year for environmental organizations introducing and educating the public about natural areas. It would be great to add another location for field trips—maybe upping my field trip count to 24 or 25/year. About twenty years ago I did co-lead two field trips to this property with permission from the owners when another campaign to save it was under way. It was spectacular to behold—a riot of color and diversity. It will be invaluable for environmental education field trips for students of all ages.

Here are a few photos from one of those field trips 20 years ago.



I enthusiastically recommend fully funding Brownstown Township's application for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to permanently protect and provide for public enjoyment of, and important research in this priceless, significant piece of our state's natural heritage. Future generations will be eternally grateful.

Sincerely,



James N. Bull, Ph.D.
Member Board of Directors, Conservation Committee
Detroit Bird Alliance
Biology & Environmental Science Professor, Wayne County Community College

Letter of Support Previously Provided

January 15, 2026

To whom it may concern:

Brownstown Township's Sibley Prairie is one of Michigan's true jewels. I write to enthusiastically support efforts by the Michigan Land Conservancy to acquire and protect 440 acres of this rare and extremely valuable ecosystem. Purchase of this site by the Michigan Land Conservancy would permanently protect a major portion of these lakeplain prairie remnants and allow for active restoration of this rare but remarkably resilient ecosystem by other conservation agencies or organizations.

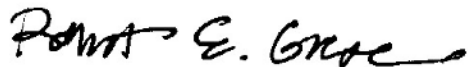
I have been familiar with the Sibley Road Complex of lakeplain prairie remnants in Brownstown Township since they were identified and recorded by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) in their report *A Survey of Lakeplain Prairie in Michigan* (Comer, et.al., 1995; available at <https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/>). Sometime after that study was completed, I personally testified at a hearing conducted by the Michigan DNR in Brownstown Township. At the time, I was President of the Michigan Natural Areas Association, a group firmly committed to protecting significant natural areas across the state. Unfortunately, there was not strong local support for protecting the land at that time.

As noted in the MNFI study, the Sibley Road Complex of prairie remnants represents one of the largest concentrations of this rare ecosystem type in all of Michigan. At the time of the study, only .6% of the historical acreage of lakeplain prairie in Southeast Michigan remained. The Sibley Road Complex is made up of a mosaic of oak savannah on the drier sand ridges and wet prairie in the lower depressions dominated by clay soils. This mosaic of lakeplain prairie and oak savannah provides critical habitat for a variety of rare plant and animal populations, some of which are listed as critically endangered within the state of Michigan.

Acquiring the Sibley Prairie property depends on the Michigan Land Conservancy's unique ability to quickly step in and raise the resources to purchase critical natural areas. They continue by working with other public and private agencies and organizations to provide the long-term restoration and care of these properties, making them available for public enjoyment and education. Protecting this parcel would add to two other preserves managed by the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy as part of the Greater Sibley Road Prairie Complex.

This is certainly an extraordinary opportunity to protect a key part of Southeast Michigan's great natural landscape heritage for the future!

Sincerely,



Robert E. Grese, Professor-Emeritus
School for Environment and Sustainability, University of Michigan



Protecting nature. Preserving life.

The Nature Conservancy in Ohio
6375 Riverside Drive, Suite 100
Dublin, OH 43017

Tel (614) 717-2770
Fax (614) 717-2777

nature.org/ohio

March 12, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board:

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy in Ohio, I write to express our full support for the protection of the 440-acre Sibley Prairie property, currently owned by Fritz Enterprises Inc.

The Sibley Prairie is located within the Oak Openings Region - a region that extends across approximately 1300 square miles of Southeast Michigan and Northwest Ohio. The Oak Openings Region contains five globally-rare natural communities, two of which are located in the Sibley Prairie property. The region is home to >125 species listed as either endangered, threatened, or species of conservation concern at the federal or state level. The Nature Conservancy has named the Oak Openings Region "One of the 200 Last Great Places on Earth." Unfortunately, most of this unique ecosystem has been converted to residential or commercial development or to agricultural land use.

The Sibley Prairie contains one of the largest remaining remnants of lakeplain prairie and lakeplain oak openings in Michigan. These globally-imperiled natural communities harbor high levels of plant and animal diversity. They also provide important ecosystem functions, including stormwater storage and filtration. In turn, these ecosystem functions improve water quality, reduce harmful algal blooms, and improve wetland habitat quality. Lakeplain prairies and oak openings in Southeast Michigan are an important stopover site for migrating birds. Protection of the Sibley Prairie also offers the opportunity for the people of Brownstown Township, and all of Michigan, to enjoy a unique and beautiful natural area through planned public access.

The Nature Conservancy's mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends, with a vision to create a world in which people and nature thrive. Protecting the Sibley Prairie will ensure that unique and critical natural communities in Southeast Michigan will continue to benefit people and nature.

We encourage the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board to fund this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pete Blank".

Pete Blank, Ph.D.
Northwest Ohio Program Manager
The Nature Conservancy in Ohio
Kitty Todd Nature Preserve
10420 Old State Line Rd., Swanton, OH 43558
peter.blank@tnc.org
419-867-1521



Mission

The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy conserves natural land and open space - including forests, wetlands, meadows, agricultural lands, and places of scenic beauty - to provide habitat for wildlife and to enrich the lives of people.

March 10, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

RE: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern,

The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy (SMLC) fully supports Brownstown Township's grant application to acquire the 440-acre Fritz Enterprises, Inc. property located at King, Sibley and Telegraph roads in Brownstown Township, Wayne County.

This property is located in the Sibley Road prairie complex as noted in the Michigan Natural Features Inventory's (MNFI) 1995 "A Survey of Lakeplain Prairie in Michigan" report. This is a longstanding reference for organizations working to protect the globally rare lakeplain prairie in the Township.

The Report notes that the Sibley Road complex is the largest prairie remnant in the state and many years ago the Michigan DNR and two conservation organizations protected small parcels within this complex to begin the land protection efforts there. One of these organizations was SMLC. Since then, SMLC has wholly protected and undertaken restoration for another prairie remnant, the Beech-Daly Road site. This is located at our Sibley Prairie Nature Preserve-West Prairie site located along West Road. Adding the Fritz property to the already protected lands within the Sibley Road complex would be a huge uplift for local lakeplain prairie land preservation including rare native plants.

Lakeplain Prairie is one of SMLC's top 3 conservation priorities and thus, we are strongly supportive of this land protection effort succeeding. The benefits to wildlife and the public are immeasurable given that it is located in a landscape mosaic of industrial enterprises, rural lands and residential neighborhoods. Historically, development pressure here has been high. To be able to protect such a large tract of contiguous land is not only rare in southeast Michigan but invaluable to southeast Michigan residents and visitors.

Finally, this opportunity is bringing attention to lakeplain prairie land protection as an important cultural preservation effort as well. The property has the potential to be a beautiful publicly-accessible site and could become the largest protected lakeplain prairie property in southeast Michigan. For these reasons it is a high priority to conserve.

Sincerely,
Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy

Jill A. Lewis
Executive Director

SMLC Local Chapters

Monroe County Chapter
Superior Township Chapter

Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy

8383 Vreeland Road
Superior Twp., MI 48198
734.484.6565
734.484.0617 (fax)

www.smlcland.org

March 8, 2026

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
Grants Management Section
P.O. Box 30425
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Sibley Prairie Acquisition, TF 26-0027

To Whom it May Concern:

I write to you on behalf of the Southwestern Chapter of the Michigan Botanical Society in support of Brownstown Charter Township's application for funds to purchase Sibley Prairie.

The Michigan Botanical Society has a long history of promoting the understanding, enjoyment and preservation of our Great Lakes flora and the conservation of our natural heritage. Throughout the years we have supported numerous conservation projects and cooperated with other conservation agencies to protect native plants and natural areas in the state and nationally.

The Michigan Botanical Society is actively involved in the effort to protect Sibley Prairie, the largest and highest quality lakeplain prairie remnant in Michigan. The Prairie is one of the largest remaining natural properties in southeast Michigan, with a rich mosaic of forest, wetland, and prairie. This is a one-time opportunity to deliver lasting public benefit where it's needed most.

Sibley Prairie lies within the boundaries of the Brownstown Prairie State Wildlife Area, the only State Wildlife Area in Wayne County. The addition of Sibley Prairie would grow the Wildlife Area to nearly 500 acres, advancing the DNR's Public Land Strategy goal of acquiring land near population centers and expanding outdoor recreation like hunting, birdwatching and nature study near where people live and work.

Southern Michigan was once a mosaic of forests, savannas, barrens, tall grass prairies and lakeplain prairies. Agriculture and development have reduced these expansive tracts to mere relics and remnants, many of which are in a degraded state. While there is no way to turn back the clock, we can still preserve the natural communities that remain.

Sibley Prairie is a unique, globally endangered natural community. The Michigan Natural Features Inventory has identified it as the highest-quality lakeplain prairie

remnant in the state, and it boasts a very high Floristic Quality Index and supports 15 threatened or special concern plant species, as well as the state-threatened Duke's skipper butterfly. Sibley Prairie is a rare and spectacular example of Michigan's natural heritage that we need to preserve for future generations.

On behalf of the Southwestern Chapter, I urge the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to provide the funding necessary to preserve Sibley Prairie.

Joe Trapp, President
Southwestern Chapter, Michigan Botanical Society