

**Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
FY 2011 Recommendation
Accomplishment Plan**

Date: December 22, 2009

Project or Program Title: (8 words or less) Washington County St. Croix River Land Protection

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Funds Recommended (\$000s)	Council Recommendation Funding	Out-Year Projections of Needs		
	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
Outdoor Heritage Fund	\$1,033,000	\$3,000,000		0

Appropriation Language

Abstract

Summarize your project or program in 250 words or less.

Washington County seeks to preserve the ecological integrity of the St. Croix River by completing 3 permanent conservation easements or fee title acquisitions to permanently protect up to 253 acres of critical riparian habitat and over one mile of shoreland. The three projects are located in Denmark Township within the state-managed portion of the St. Croix Scenic Riverway and are the remaining large lots along the lower St. Croix River. These properties provide the critical connections needed to complete a permanently protected three-mile continuous corridor of forested bluff lands and ravines. This funding will address two of the Outdoor Heritage Council's priority actions for the Metropolitan Urbanizing Section: to protect a habitat corridor along the St. Croix River and to protect, enhance and restore big woods forests and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity.

Narrative

What is the problem to be addressed? How will this directly relate to restoring, protecting, or enhancing habitat? Why will this strategy work? Describe the nature and extent of any partnerships in this project, stakeholder and public participation processes associated with the project and any anticipated support or opposition to the project. For land acquisitions, indicate local government support and approval

The St. Croix River and its watershed is a national treasure whose habitat and water quality is threatened. The St. Croix River watershed is considered to be one of the most biologically diverse rivers in the Upper Mississippi River basin. Its waters support 95 fish and approximately 38 mussel species, many of which are on the state and federal endangered species lists. Its forested lands provide nesting habitat for Bald Eagles and are home to several threatened and endangered species. Although the waters of the St. Croix River are very pristine, they are impacted by nutrient and sediment pollution. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency designated Lake St. Croix, the lower 25 miles of the river, as an “impaired water” due to high levels of phosphorus. This designation mandates that the federal, state and local governments take actions to ensure the lake’s recovery. With increasing urbanization in the watershed this will be difficult to do. By limiting development and maintaining mature forests along the river, the proposed acquisitions will help defray pollution impacts and will aid in arresting the decline in water quality in the lower stretch of the river. The proposed acquisitions will maintain essential habitat for resident and migratory wildlife, both game and non game species. These acquisitions will help maintain a high quality river fishery that is dependent on clean water. They will maintain hunting opportunities on private land, with landowner permission, an opportunity that will be lost if the land is subdivided.

The owners of each parcel applied to the Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program and are willing sellers. The proposed acquisitions were chosen from 44 applications to the county’s Land and Water Legacy Program. The applications were evaluated by a multi-agency technical committee and recommended by a citizen advisory committee. The projects were chosen as the highest priority because they best showcase the county’s priorities: preserve critical habitat; protect water resources; create networks of protected habitat; and protect lands that are accessible or highly visible to the public.

The county has received letters of support for these acquisitions from the National Park Service, Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, St. Croix River Association, St. Croix Scenic Byway, St. Croix Scenic Coalition, and Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center. Denmark Township is concerned about the long-term tax impacts of restricting development on a large amount of high value residential land. To mitigate the impacts of fee acquisition, Washington County makes in lieu of tax payments when there is a taxable use of the acquired land such as farming or house rental. Through the purchase of conservation easements, the county can meet its habitat and water quality goals while the land stays in private ownership and on the tax rolls.

A reduction from the requested amount of funds will required the county to continue seeking additional funding partners to enable the county to complete all three projects. Other funding partners may have additional requirements such as coholding of the conservation easements.

Relationship to *Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan* and other published resource management plans.

Reference resource management plans and their priorities that support this project.

Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan: Addresses three of the habitat recommendations.

- #1. To protect priority land habitats. The plan identifies the St. Croix River valley as having high conservation priority.
- #2. To protect critical shorelands of streams and lakes. The plan suggests that high priority shore lands be protected via economic incentives and other tools such as conservation easements. The plan acknowledges conservation easements as one of the key tools necessary to achieve land conservation goals in metropolitan areas where high land values make it very difficult to acquire fee title to all priority lands.
- #7: To keep water on the landscape.

Action Plan for Minnesota’s Wildlife: The properties provide habitat in the St. Paul Baldwin Plains and Moraines subsection for a variety of species in greatest conservation need.

The properties are located with the St. Croix Corridor of the Metro Conservation Corridors Plan, a network of remaining critical habitat areas in the metro area.

The properties are located within the DNR’s Regionally-Significant Ecological Area.

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway District Management Plan: Calls for more land protection along the river.

Project Design and Evaluation

Describe the scope of the project in appropriate measures (i.e. ,acreage numbers of lakes, miles of shoreline)

ACRES CATEGORIZED UNDER RESTORATION HAVE POTENTIAL FOR RESTORATION. THE RESTORATION WILL NOT OCCUR UNTIL AFTER ACQUISITION AND IS NOT FUNDED BY THIS GRANT.

Project Scope	Wetlands and Wetland Systems	Prairies and Prairie Systems	Forests and Forest Systems	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife (Include Description in Footnote)
Restore				<i>One mile of St. Croix River frontage.</i>
Protect	1.5	49.5	202	
Enhance				

Counties in which activities will take place	Wetlands and Wetland Systems	Prairies and Prairie Systems	Forests and Forest Systems	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				
Protect	<i>Washington</i>	<i>Washington</i>	<i>Washington</i>	
Enhance				

Acres Within Each Ecological Section	Metropolitan-Urbanizing Area	Forest-Prairie Transition	Southeast Forest	Prairie Region	Northern Forest
Restore					
Protect	253				
Enhance					

Funding Per Ecological Section	Metropolitan-Urbanizing Area	Forest-Prairie Transition	Southeast Forest	Prairie Region	Northern Forest
Restore					
Protect	\$1033,000				
Enhance					

Indicate what is being funded

Funding Resource Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				
Protect	\$6,125	\$202,108	\$824,767	
Enhance				

Acquisition and Tax Data	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability				
Acquired in Fee without State PILT Liability				
Permanent Easement	1.5	49.5	202	

Budget

Please describe how you intend to spend the recommended funds

Budget Item	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
Personnel			
Contracts			
Equipment/Tools			
Materials/Supplies			
Fee Acquisition			
Easement Acquisition	\$720,000	\$313,000	
Easement Stewardship			
Travel			
Additional Budget Items			
TOTAL	\$720,000	\$313,000	

Relationship to Current Budget

Indicate the percentage of this project in relation to your organization/agency's total budget.

Demonstrate how this funding and activity will supplement your current budget.

If existing staff will be reassigned to this project, indicate what current projects or duties will be affected.

Washington County has budgeted \$10 million in bonding in 2010 for the Land and Water Legacy Program. This funding would be approximately 10% of the total program budget. The entire amount of funding will be used for acquiring interests in property.

Personnel

List the positions, name (if known) and anticipated program funds to be paid by this recommendation

Not applicable.

Position	Name	Amount

Leverage

List the sources and amounts of leverage you have in hand or anticipate by fiscal year.

SOURCE	FY 11		FY 12		FY 13	
	In hand	Anticipated	In hand	Anticipated	In hand	Anticipated
State						
DNR Metro Greenways	330,000					
Non state						
County Levy	2,362,500					
Metro Park Acquisition	1,387,500					
Other		587,000				
In-kind/Volunteer						
Appraisals, environmental assessments, survey, title work, recorder's fee, closing costs, management plans, etc.	75,000					
TOTAL	4,155,000	587,000				

Indicate how the leverage will be used

Leverage	State				Non-State			
	Wetlands and Wetland Systems	Prairies and Prairie Systems	Forests and Forest Systems	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife	Wetlands and Wetland Systems	Prairies and Prairie Systems	Forests and Forest Systems	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore								
Protect	\$1,956	\$64,548	\$263,408		\$26,159	\$863,231	\$3,522,698	
Enhance								

Accomplishment Timeline

Milestones	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	Budgetary Expenditure
Project 1: purchase conservation easement	quarter			\$200,000
Project 2: purchase conservation easement	quarter			\$520,000
Project 3: purchase conservation easement		quarter		\$313,000

Maintenance and Sustainability

Please describe how lasting improvement will be maintained/ sustained. For easement acquisitions and fee acquisitions, explain how maintenance and sustaining costs will be paid.

The long-term protection will be assured through perpetual conservation easements that confine development, management and use of the properties to activities that are consistent with preservation of the public values. Washington County will hold all land interests that are acquired. The county follows the standards and practices of the National Land Trust Alliance, thus ensuring long-lasting conservation easements. The county monitors each of its acquisitions annually. The county attorney enforces the terms of the conservation easement. Each acquisition requires preparation of a management plan that recommends activities to improve and restore the ecological functions of the property. Washington County works with other agencies to secure funds and technical assistance for landowners to implement the management recommendations. The cost of these activities is funded through county property tax dollars.

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Accomplishment Plan
LSOHC

