

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

**Date:** January 19, 2010

**Project or Program Title:** Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program in Minnesota

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	Council Recommendation Funding	Out-Year Projections of Needs		
		FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
<b>Funds Recommended (\$000s)</b>	<b>FY 2011</b>			
Outdoor Heritage Fund	<b>\$ 3,505,000</b>	0	0	0

**Appropriation Language**

\$3,505,000 in fiscal year 2011 is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever to acquire land for the Waterfowl Production Area program in western and southern Minnesota.

**Abstract**

Pheasants Forever (PF) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will cooperate to permanently restore and protect approximately 700 acres as Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) in western and southern Minnesota. All lands acquired through this grant proposal will be owned and managed by the Service as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

## Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program in Minnesota

### **Narrative**

Tremendous economic, agricultural, recreational, and developmental pressures including gravel mining, widely fluctuating commodity prices, withdrawal of CRP contracts, wind energy, ethanol and bio-mass production are squeezing Minnesota's habitat resources and the plants and animals that depend on them. WPAs are acquired with funds derived from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps and managed for wildlife and conservation benefits as part of the National Wildlife System. Land acquisition and restoration have not kept pace with habitat needs however.

Funds will be utilized to permanently restore and protect approximately 500 acres of grassland and 200 acres of wetland as Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) in western and southern Minnesota. The loss of grassland and wetland habitats in Minnesota is well documented. One of the primary ways to reverse this downward trend is to permanently acquire, then restore wetland and grassland habitats on those properties. The Service and our partners have been utilizing this strategy for over 50-years with the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program (SWAP). Utilizing the landscape level planning tools produced by our HAPET office in Fergus Falls, MN, the Service and our partners have strategically identified properties for acquisition. These strategies are well tested and are supported by the greater conservation community" here in Minnesota.

This Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) project will add to the Service's acquisition of Minnesota's valuable wetland and grassland habitats. Upon notification of project approval, Pheasants Forever & the Service will prioritize lands to be acquired. PF will complete landowner contacts, appraisals and purchase agreements. At closing PF will take ownership to allow for the required reversionary clause. Then the lands will be donated to the Service as WPAs and all management actions including the prompt restoration of upland habitats and wetlands will be funded by the Service and protected in perpetuity. The Service will also be responsible for payment of PILT to the Counties.

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

The Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan, the U.S. Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Implementation Plan, MN State Waterfowl and Pheasant Plans, the Partners In Flight-Grassland Bird Plans, the US Shorebird Conservation Plan for the Northern Plains/Prairie Potholes Region, the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan and many other plans, papers, and studies have directly and indirectly noted that the current pace of conservation actions is not likely to reverse previous wetland and grassland losses in Minnesota or the Prairie Pothole Region of North America. Many authors and organizations have recommended that accelerating protection and restoring lost and degraded habitats are essential strategies in reversing the distressing decline in watershed protection, conservation habitats and wildlife populations.

**Project Design and Evaluation**

<b>Project Scope</b>	<b>Wetlands and Wetland Systems</b>	<b>Prairies and Prairie Systems</b>	<b>Forests and Forest Systems</b>	<b>Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife (Include Description in Footnote)</b>
<b>Restore</b>				
<b>Protect</b>	200 acres	500 acres		
<b>Enhance</b>				

<b>Counties in which activities will take place</b>	<b>Wetlands and Wetland Systems</b>	<b>Prairies and Prairie Systems</b>	<b>Forests and Forest Systems</b>	<b>Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife</b>
<b>Restore</b>	Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, Grant, Big Stone, Swift, Kandiyohi, Lyon, Lincoln, Jackson, Fairbault, Freeborn, Mahnomen	Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, Grant, Big Stone, Swift, Kandiyohi, Lyon, Lincoln, Jackson, Fairbault, Freeborn, Mahnomen		
<b>Protect</b>	Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, Grant, Big Stone, Swift, Kandiyohi, Lyon, Lincoln, Jackson, Fairbault, Freeborn, Mahnomen	Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, Grant, Big Stone, Swift, Kandiyohi, Lyon, Lincoln, Jackson, Fairbault, Freeborn, Mahnomen		
<b>Enhance</b>				

<b>Acres Within Each Ecological Section</b>	<b>Metropolitan-Urbanizing Area</b>	<b>Forest-Prairie Transition</b>	<b>Southeast Forest</b>	<b>Prairie Region</b>	<b>Northern Forest</b>
<b>Restore</b>					
<b>Protect</b>	30 acres	120 acres		550 acres	
<b>Enhance</b>					

These are estimates based upon current project list and depend upon willing sellers.

<b>Funding Per Ecological Section</b>	<b>Metropolitan-Urbanizing Area</b>	<b>Forest-Prairie Transition</b>	<b>Southeast Forest</b>	<b>Prairie Region</b>	<b>Northern Forest</b>
<b>Restore</b>	\$36,473	\$145,885		\$668,643	
<b>Protect</b>	\$ 113,742	\$454,971		\$ 2,085,286	
<b>Enhance</b>					

Contract and personnel costs are prorated based on acres per ecological section and are assigned to the restore category.

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<b>Funding Resource Type</b>	<b>Wetlands</b>	<b>Prairies</b>	<b>Forests</b>	<b>Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife</b>
<b>Restore</b>	\$243,143	\$ 607,857		
<b>Protect</b>	\$758,286	\$1,895,714		
<b>Enhance</b>				

Contract and personnel costs are prorated based on acres per ecological section and are assigned to the restore category.

<b>Acquisition and Tax Data</b>	<b>Wetlands</b>	<b>Prairies</b>	<b>Forests</b>	<b>Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife</b>
<b>Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability</b>				
<b>Acquired in Fee without State PILT Liability</b>	200 acres	500 acres		
<b>Permanent Easement</b>				

All acquisitions take a willing seller, thus the projects identified and listed as part of this work plan are in constant flux. Some projects will inevitably fall off the list as potential sellers choose not to accept an offer, or simply choose not to sell at this time. While every effort will be made to acquire the priority properties on the list included herein, it is likely that projects will be added to the list as priority opportunities constantly are arising while others are unattainable. Thus, geography and acreage figures above are estimates based upon the current priority list.

**Budget**

<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 11</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 12</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 13</b>
<b>Personnel</b>	\$ 34,000		
<b>Contracts</b>	\$ 205,000		
<b>Equipment/Tools</b>			
<b>Materials/Supplies</b>			
<b>Fee Acquisition</b>	\$ 2,654,000		
<b>Easement Acquisition</b>			
<b>Easement Stewardship</b>			
<b>Travel</b>			
<b>Additional Budget Items</b>			
<b>Restoration</b>		\$ 612,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ 2,893,000	\$ 612,000	

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**Relationship to Current Budget**

LSOHC recommended dollars will augment the limited land acquisition funds received by the Service and accelerate the number of acres enrolled as Waterfowl Production Areas.

**Personnel**

Position	Name	Amount
PF Sr. Field Coordinator/Director of Conservation		\$ 10,000
PF Regional Staff (2)		\$ 16,000
PF Director of Finance		\$ 8,000

Only documented, direct to project costs will be part of this grant. Should all personnel dollars not be used, PF and the Service will utilize the remainder to get additional projects acquired or restored.

**Leverage**

SOURCE	FY 11		FY 12		FY 13	
	In hand	Anticipated	In hand	Anticipated	In hand	Anticipated
<b>State</b>						
<b>Non state</b>						
Pheasants Forever	\$ 25,000	\$ 50,000		\$ 25,000		
Federal Duck Stamp Funds	\$2,500,000					
<b>In-kind/Volunteer</b>						
Service		\$ 50,000		\$ 50,000		\$ 200,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$2,525,000	\$ 100,000		\$ 75,000		\$ 200,000

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					\$ 50,000	\$ 350,000		
Protect					\$ 750,000	\$1,750,000		
Enhance								

## Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program in Minnesota

### Accomplishment Timeline

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>FY 2011</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>Budgetary Expenditure</b>
<i>Identify priority acquisitions.</i>	10/01/2009			
<i>Contract appraisals ordered.</i>	10/01/2010			\$ 50,000
<i>Purchase agreements.</i>	02/01/2011			
<i>Re-evaluate Tract Priority</i>	02/15/2011			
<i>Contract appraisals ordered</i>	03/11/2011			
<i>Purchase agreements</i>	6/01/2011			Estimated cost of approximately \$3,800 per acre
<i>Restoration actions initiated</i>	6/01/2011			
<i>Close on optioned tracts</i>		09/01/2011		
<i>Donate Lands to Service</i>		09/01/2011		
<i>Wetland restorations Completed</i>			09/01/2012	\$ 200,000
<i>Upland Restorations Completed</i>			09/01/2013	\$ 412,000

### Maintenance and Sustainability

All grant monies received for this project will result in fee title transfers into the National Wildlife Refuge System. The long-term protection and management of these habitats will be the responsibility of the Service, an agency that employs professional managers, biologists, field staffs, and enforcement officers and has an annual operating budget designated specifically for the management of Refuge resources. Wetlands and their contributing watersheds will be protected and prairie habitats monitored and managed. The Service has an active, professional prescribed burning program and utilizes fire to reduce woody invasion of prairies, enhance diversity, and rejuvenate uplands. Biological, mechanical, and sometimes chemical treatments are used as needed in an integrated management approach to provide high quality migration and breeding habitats. Acquisitions in the project will be targeted to complete the restoration of large wetland complexes surrounded by native or planted tall grass prairie uplands. Revenue sharing payments (in lieu of taxes) will be made by the Service for all fee title lands in accordance with federal law.

## L-SOHC Sections

