

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

Date: December 21, 2009

Project Title: Northeastern Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Partnership

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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	\$1,559,000	0	0	0

Appropriation Language

Abstract

With the Council's recommended allocation, the sharp-tailed grouse habitat partnership will protect, enhance and restore up to 1,419.7 acres of open and brushland habitat and 145 acres of forest habitat in northeastern Minnesota, provide access to additional public lands for recreation, provide multiple environmental benefits, and benefit sharp-tailed grouse and other open and brushland species in greatest conservation need (several of which are state listed as endangered, threatened or special concern) by pursuing acquisition of all or part of a parcel in Kanabec County (priority #1, Tumler Tract), and all of a parcel in Aitkin County (priority #2, Thompson Tract), subject to negotiations, for addition to the WMA system. If needed, one or more of the parcels that were prioritized as #3 and #5-7 in the proposal will be pursued instead (see list and map on pages 7-8).

As noted in the LSOHC's Northern Forest Section Vision, the condition of brushlands within forest lands is of special concern. The partnership, including Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (MSGs), Pheasants Forever (PF), Minnesota Waterfowl Association (MWA), Ruffed Grouse Society

(RGS), Minnesota Deer Hunters Association (MDHA), Central Lakes College Natural Resource Club (CLC) and Minnesota DNR, is collaborating to ensure that landscapes important to the sustainability of sharp-tailed grouse and other native, open and brushland wildlife, and the multiple benefits they provide, persist in the future.

Narrative

The problem to be addressed is loss, degradation and fragmentation of open and brushland habitat within northeastern Minnesota due to natural succession and conversion to other land uses. It has led to a long term decline in the sharp-tailed grouse population and populations of several other wildlife species that use or depend upon these habitats, causing their listing as species in greatest conservation need. This problem is directly related to protecting, restoring and enhancing habitat because these measures are precisely what is needed to solve it. The strategy of protection, restoration and enhancement will work because sufficient, secure, quality habitat is key to sustaining wildlife populations. Where brushland wildlife species have the amount and quality of habitat they require, their populations are sustainable, having greater resilience and ability to persist in the future.

The nature and extent of the partnership includes project coordination and management by MSGS, grant management and appraisal assistance by PF (i.e. fiscal agent), and cooperation with willing sellers and oversight of habitat work and hiring of contractors by local DNR wildlife managers, as well as financial support from MSGS, PF, MWA, RGS, MDHA, CLC, and DNR. There are no stakeholder or public participation processes associated with the project other than interested parties are very welcome to join and support the partnership and its habitat efforts. Additional financial support is anticipated from PF and MDHA chapters. No opposition to the project is anticipated. The two parcels in Kanabec and Aitkin Counties have not had formal County Board approval, but local County Commissioners have been contacted and their initial support successfully sought.

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

Resource management plans and their priorities that support this project include the:

- *Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan* (protect priority lands; improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation; restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watershed; keep water on the landscape),
- *MDNR's Tomorrow's Habitat of the Wild and Rare* (conserve SGCN and key habitats, stabilize and increase populations of SGCN),
- *MDNR's Strategic Conservation Agenda* (address energy and climate, and landscape change trends through potential biomass harvest as a brushland habitat management tool and addition of WMAs, respectively) and
- *Minnesota's WMA Acquisition – The Next 50 Years – Habitat is the Key* (meet goal of additional WMA acres).

Project Design and Evaluation

Project Scope	Wetlands and Wetland Systems	Prairies and Prairie Systems	Forests and Forest Systems	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				259.7 ac
Protect				1564.7 ac
Enhance				1305 ac

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				Aitkin
Protect				Kanabec, Aitkin
Enhance				Kanabec, Aitkin

Acres Within Each Ecological Section	Metropolitan-Urbanizing Area	Forest-Prairie Transition	Southeast Forest	Prairie Region	Northern Forest
Restore					259.7 ac
Protect					1564.7 ac
Enhance					1305 ac

Funding Per Ecological Section	Metropolitan-Urbanizing Area	Forest-Prairie Transition	Southeast Forest	Prairie Region	Northern Forest
Restore					\$10,600
Protect					\$1,525,150
Enhance					\$23,250

Funding Resource Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				\$10,600
Protect				\$1,525,150
Enhance				\$23,250

* Habitat acres include both wetland (435 acres) and forest (1,129.7 acres) systems. Wetland system acres are predominantly open and brushland habitats. Forest system acres are upland also predominantly open and brushland habitats (984.7 acres). Because brushlands in the Northern Forest are not part of prairie ecosystems they are placed under the Forest system category along with the open land habitats intermixed with them. Approximately 145 ac of the forest system acres are actual forest habitat.

Relationship to Current Budget

Grant funds will augment partners' limited habitat protection, restoration and enhancement funds. Without LSOHC funds, these projects would be much less feasible to accomplish. These projects will become part of existing MSGS, PF and DNR staff's duties. Other projects and work will not be affected by these projects.

Personnel

Position	Name	Amount
PF MN Director of Conservation Programs	Joe Pavelko	\$5,000
PF Regional Wildlife Biologist	Eran Sandquist	\$5,000
PF Director of Public Finance/Assistant	Ron Leathers	\$10,000

* Only documented expenditures direct to this project would be eligible for reimbursement. If personnel funds remain, all unused funding will be applied towards restoration and enhancement.

Leverage

SOURCE	FY 11		FY 12		FY 13	
	In hand	Anticipated	In hand	Anticipated	In hand	Anticipated
State						
Minnesota DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife (In-kind staff time/salaries)				\$17,000		
Non state						
MSGS		\$1,000				
PF – State		\$5,000				
- Kanabec Co.		\$5,000				
- Other Chapters		\$5,000				
MWA – Hill River		\$6,300				
RGS - State		\$1,000				
MDHA		TBD				
CLC – Natural Resource Club		\$300				
In-kind/Volunteer						
TOTAL		\$23,600		\$17,000		

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				\$2,800				
Protect								\$23,600
Enhance				\$14,200				

Accomplishment Timeline

Milestones	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	Budgetary Expenditure
<i>Contract appraisals ordered</i>	<i>Aug. 1, 2010</i>			\$9,000
<i>Purchase Agreements</i>	<i>Jan. 1, 2011</i>			\$1,458,650
<i>Close on Tracts</i>	<i>April 1, 2011</i>			\$3,500
<i>Tracts Donated to DNR (Protection Completed)</i>	<i>May 1, 2011</i>			
<i>Boundary Surveys Conducted</i>	<i>May-June, 2011</i>			\$35,000
<i>Restoration & Enhancement Initiated</i>		<i>July 1, 2011</i>		\$32,850
<i>Restoration & Enhancement Completed</i>		<i>June 30, 2012</i>		

Maintenance and Sustainability

All grant funds received for this partnership will result in fee title transfer of the two tracts into the Minnesota DNR Wildlife Management Area system and restoration and enhancement of open and brushland habitats on them. Long term protection and management of the tracts will be the responsibility of the DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife which employs professional managers, biologists, field staff, and enforcement officers. Habitat improvements will be sustained through the DNR budget and funds provided through the partnership. Partner funds will come from their general membership and grants, such as LSOHC and Heritage Enhancement grants. Treatments to maintain high quality open and brushland habitats will likely include prescribed burning, mowing, shearing, timber harvest, and possibly grazing, biomass harvest and occasional haying.

List of Proposed Open and Brushland Tracts to Protect (from Highest to Lowest Priority) (see map on next page):

Kanabec County

- 1. Tumlér tract (T42N R22W, parts of Sec. 20, 28, 29, 31 & 32)**
- 1,285 acres; \$2,700,000 estimate

Aitkin County

- 2. Thompson tract (T48N R25W, E1/2 Sec. 5)**
- 279.7 acres; \$280,000 estimate
3. Rono tract (T50N R25W, W½ Sec. 18, W½ Sec. 19)
- 596.4 acres; \$358,000 estimate
4. Watters tract (T50N R25W, E1/2SW Sec. 11)
- 80 acres; \$56,000 estimate

(This parcel may be protected through the DNR Accelerated Forest Wildlife Habitat Program proposal.)

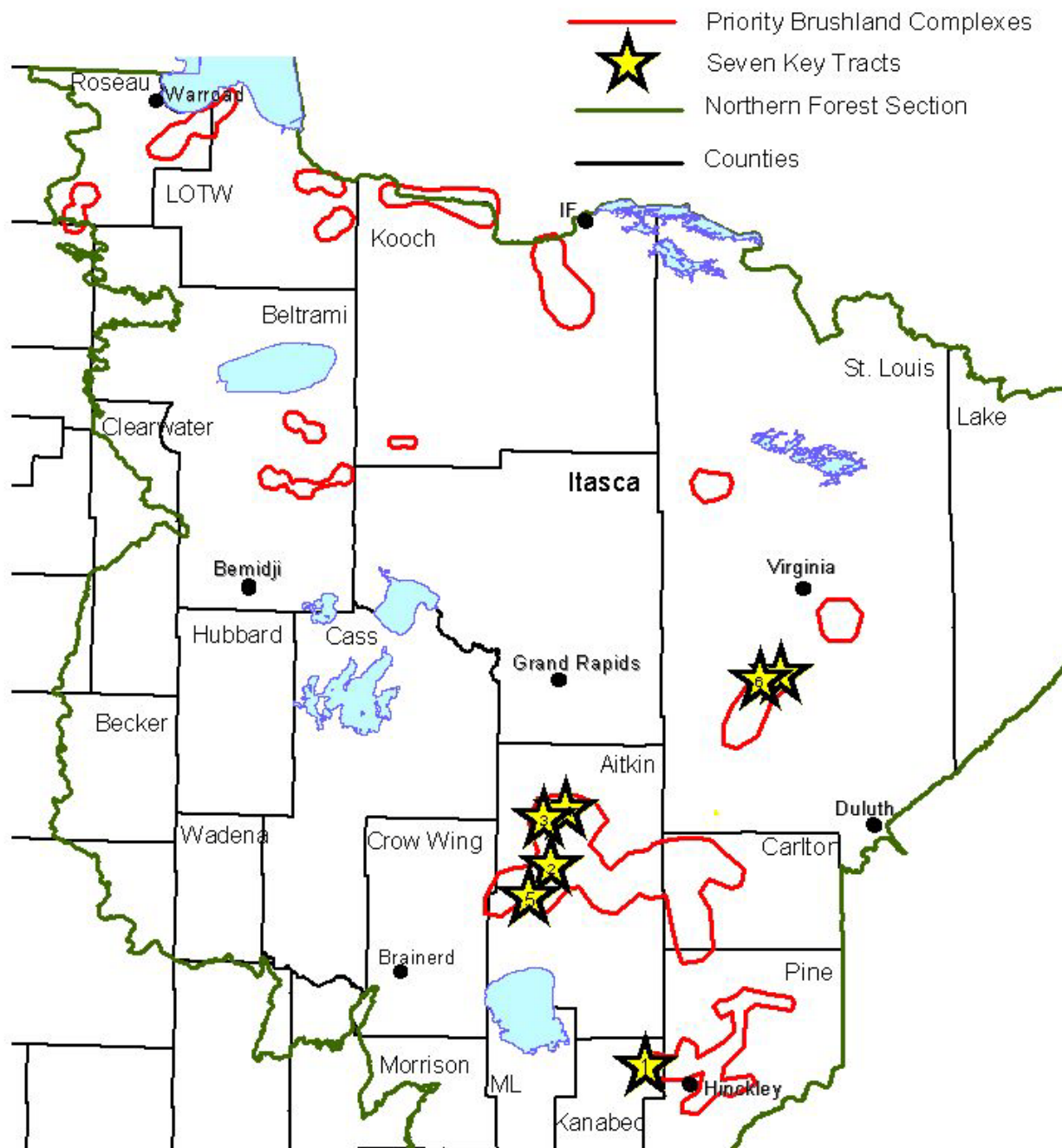
5. Rezac tract (T47N R26W, Sec. 9)
- 158.5 acres; \$109,000 estimate

St. Louis County

6. Thomas tract (T55N R18W, SW Sec. 27)
- 20 acres; \$14,000 estimate
7. Palusky tract (T55N R18W, NE Sec. 27)
- 12.8 acres; \$9,000 estimate

LSOHC Proposal Northeastern Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Partnership

Priority Brushland Complexes and Seven Key Tracts Available for Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement within the Northern Forest Section



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