

Program Title: Habitat Enhancement and Restoration in the Minnesota River Watershed

**Request for Funding Form
Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
Fiscal Year 2011**

Program or Project Title: Habitat Enhancement and Restoration in the Minnesota River Watershed

Date: 10/22/09

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	Council Funding Request	Out-Year Projections of Needs <i>For programs that may want to request OHF funds in future recommendation rounds, complete the columns below. One time requests enter zeros in all 3 fiscal years</i>		
Funds Requested (\$000s)	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
Outdoor Heritage Fund	1,914,500	1,914,500	0	0

A. Summary

Through this project, we will acquire (via BWSR) conservation easements on approximately 500 acres of critical riparian corridors in the western Minnesota River watershed and restore those 500 acres through on-the-ground efforts. The project will provide funds to plant native trees and shrubs along riparian corridors for wildlife habitat and clean water benefits.

B. Background Information

What is the problem or opportunity being addressed?

The Minnesota Forest Resources Council defined a riparian area as the area of land and water forming the transition from aquatic to terrestrial ecosystems and denoted the riparian management zones (RMZs) along streams, lakes and open water wetlands as of special concerns. These RMZs are intended to retain relatively continuous forest cover for protection and maintenance of aquatic and wildlife habitat, aesthetics, recreation, and forest products. In the *Riparian Forests in Minnesota: A Report to the State Legislature*, DNR concluded that new

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projects related to riparian areas were needed; and that educational efforts should continue in order to teach landowners about the function and value of riparian areas, and about the use of applied forest management guidelines.

What action will be taken?

NWTF will hire a project-specific staff to identify riparian areas in the Upper Minnesota River Watershed (Big Stone, LacQui Parle, Chippewa and Swift Counties) for habitat enhancement and restoration activities in an effort to restore and connect blocks of riparian corridors.

Who will take action and when?

Project activities are as follows:

- Hold at least one training session for agency and private partners to increase awareness of wild turkey habitat needs within riparian areas.
- Identify potential participants (landowners).
- Secure conservation easements on selected properties via Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).
- Provide trees, shrubs, mats and tubes (oak, other hardwoods and mast producing shrubs).
- Landowners or contractors (on large sites) will plant the seedlings in spring of 2011.
- Hold at least one Wild Turkey Woodlands Field Day within project area to educate landowners about riparian management and wild turkey biology.
- Provide participating landowners with an interactive land management CD

How will you coordinate this program with the other Constitutional Funding?

N/A

What specific habitat changes will occur if this item is funded? Be specific about and list multiple benefits if they exist.

Native trees and shrubs planted in selected riparian areas within the Minnesota River Watershed will provide much needed connectivity of habitat, travel lanes, food and shelter for wild turkeys, game birds, migratory songbirds, small, medium-sized and large mammals. Existing woodlots will be connected, linking habitat areas.

Will your Outdoor Heritage Fund dollar request complete the planned accomplishments?

☒ YES ☐ NO

If not, how will you finance completion?

There is the potential to extend the project with additional funding in subsequent years, if available.

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How will you pay for the maintenance of the accomplishments?

The participating landowners will be responsible for follow-up maintenance of the riparian areas, although little is anticipated. The initial planting mortality of seedlings will be replaced by the nursery, provided the mortality was not caused by poor planting techniques.

How does this action directly restore, enhance, or protect prairies, wetlands, forests or habitat for fish, game, and wildlife?

The management practices in this project (protection and planting of woody cover in riparian areas) will provide connectivity between existing woodlots, and existing patches of riparian vegetation. This is essential habitat for wild turkeys, migratory songbirds and other wildlife, as it provides safe cover for daily movement and migration. Aside from the direct benefits to wildlife, the plantings will help stabilize the soil and aid in improving water quality.

If you are restoring or enhancing property, is the activity on permanently protected land?

 X YES NO

If yes briefly describe the kind of protection.

Permanent conservation easements will be obtained via BWSR, using project funds.

How will you ensure transparency and provide information about your work and use of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars?

Project staff will conduct a baseline study, which will document the existing conditions of the project sites. Staff will document the findings using designated photo point locations and canvas the areas for signs of wildlife use. Project staff will monitor on-the-ground activities and return to the site after completion of these activities. During this time, staff will conduct a post monitoring investigation using designated photo point locations and canvas the areas for signs of wildlife use. A final report will be prepared to document all of the findings and results from the project work activities. This report will be disseminated through partner agencies and through NWTF via its 2,300 local chapter network.

When do you expect to see these changes?

Seedlings will take several years before they are large enough to provide food and cover for wildlife. Once established, the woody vegetation will self-seed and reproduce vegetatively.

Why will this strategy work?

Landowners will be made aware of the value of woody riparian cover and will be likely to maintain it into the future, especially with a conservation easement in place. Habitat corridors are important for travel lanes as well as food and shelter for wildlife and will enhance the survival and reproduction of those species.

Who might make decisions that assist or work against achieving the expected impact program?

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Targeted landowners may choose not to participate, shifting the focus of the project to secondary sites.

If this is acquisition of land, has the local government formally approved the acquisition?

N/A

If this is fee simple acquisition of land, is the land free of any other permanent protection such as a conservation easement?

N/A

If this is an easement acquisition, will the eased land be open for public use? If so what kind of use?

Unknown at this time. The riparian corridors will be relatively narrow and may not provide much opportunity for public use. Some parcels, however may provide key access to public lands.

If easement acquisition, will the easement be a permanent conservation easements as described in MS 2009, Chapter 84C.01, specifically protecting the natural resource values of real property forever?

☒X___YES

___NO

If you are proposing funding for a new or ongoing program how long into the future do you expect this program to operate?

The proposed project will run for two years.

1. Which planning sections will you work in? Check all that apply in the list below.

___ Northern Forest

___ Forest/Prairie Transition

___ Southeast Forest

☒X___ Prairie

___ Metropolitan Urbanizing Area

2. Does the request address an urgent conservation opportunity that will be lost if not immediately funded?

___YES

☒X___NO

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If yes, please explain.

- 3. Does the request restore and/or enhance habitat on existing state-owned Wildlife or Aquatic Management Areas or Scientific and Natural Areas?**

YES X NO

If Yes, list the names of the WMAs and/or SNAs and the acres to be restored and/or enhanced.

- 4. Is this request based on assessment through a science based strategic planning and evaluation model similar to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model?**

X	YES		NO
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If yes explain the model briefly.

In the *Riparian Forests in Minnesota: A Report to the State Legislature*, DNR concluded that new projects related to riparian areas were needed; and that educational efforts should continue in order to teach landowners about the function and value of riparian areas, and about the use of applied forest management guidelines.

The North American Wild Turkey Management Plan also addresses the riparian areas in southern Minnesota and has named this area a Habitat Focus Area.

- 5. Explain the scientific foundation for your project, and the benefits it will produce.**

The Minnesota Forest Resources Council defined a riparian area as the area of land and water forming the transition from aquatic to terrestrial ecosystems and denoted the riparian management zones (RMZs) along streams, lakes and open water wetlands as of special concerns. These RMZs are intended to retain relatively continuous forest cover for protection and maintenance of aquatic and wildlife habitat, aesthetics, recreation, and forest products.

The NRCS has provided NWTF with maps that show some of the environmental value of the riparian project - Non-urban phosphorus and nitrogen runoff maps. We can provide these maps upon request.

6. How do you set priorities? *(Be sure to list the criteria you use and the weight you give each one.)*

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Priority lands for this project will be determined by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Landowners will be chosen by the riparian area's proximity to other wooded sites. Those linking woodlots will receive priority. We can provide additional information about ranking criteria if necessary.

C. Relationship to the *Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan* and Other Published Resource Management Plans

According to the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan, "Minnesota should greatly increase the use of economic incentives and other tools for private landowners to protect shorelines and other sensitive land along lakes, especially along shallow lakes and shallow bays of deep lakes, and streams and rivers throughout Minnesota. This is also needed for riparian buffers around sinkholes in agricultural lands in southeastern Minnesota." The proposed project provides landowners with said economic incentives.

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D. Budget

Budget Item	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
Personnel	205,000	205,000	
Contracts			
Equipment/Tools/Supplies	12,000	12,000	
Fee Acquisition			
Easement Acquisition	1,375,000	1,375,000	
Easement Stewardship			
Professional Services			
Travel	8,500	8,500	
Additional Budget Items (restoration activities, field and training days, etc,)	314,000	314,000	
TOTAL	1,914,500	1,914,500	

E. Personnel Details *In the space below list the names, titles and anticipated program funds to be paid by this recommendation. If you will need to fill a position just list the title and amount.*

Title	Name	Amount.
Senior Regional Biologist	Dave Neu	\$5,000 per year
Project Technician		\$100,000 per year
Project Technician		\$100,000 per year

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F. All Leverage In the table below list the sources and amounts of leverage you anticipate by fiscal year you anticipate receiving it. Include state and non-state leverage.

Source of Non-State Leverage	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
Landowner in-kind	\$152,000	\$152,000	
TOTAL	\$152,000	\$152,000	

G. Outcomes:

- 1) *In the first table below, quantify the outcomes you plan to achieve with the recommended funds.*
- 2) *In the second table show list the sections where outcomes will occur.*
- 3) *In the third table, allocate your recommended funds to each cell with outcomes listed in table 1.*
- 4) *In the fourth table show the leverage to be applied to each cell with outcomes listed in table 1. and*
- 5) *If you have any outcomes listed in the “protect” row in table 1, account for them according to the type of acquisition and PILT status in table 5*

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Table 1 Accomplish- ments	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				<i>500 acres/year</i>
Protect				
Enhance				

Table 2 Sections Impacted and Impact Quantifier	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				<i>500 acres/year</i>
Protect				
Enhance				

Table 3 Recommend Fund Allocation	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				<i>\$1,914,500</i>
Protect				
Enhance				

Table 4 Leverage \$	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				<i>\$152,000/year</i>
Protect				
Enhance				

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Table 5 Acquisition 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				<i>500 acres/year</i>

H. Accomplishment Time Table Using the headings below, include a clear statement of how much of what is being accomplished and when. Attach a map showing where accomplishments are anticipated. Accomplishments should clearly restore, enhance or protect forests, wetlands, prairies and habitat for fish, game and wildlife.

Milestone	Date	Measure
Identify Landowners	Spring 2011/2012	<i>Contracts</i>
Secure Conservation Easements on Selected Properties	December 2011/2012	<i>Agreements</i>
Plant Seedlings	Spring 2011/2012	<i>Site Visits</i>

I. Relationship to Your Current Budget

The proposed project is not part of NWTF's current operating budget. It will allow us to hire two employees.

J. How Will the Habitat Improvements Be Sustained?

The participating landowners will be responsible for follow-up maintenance of the riparian areas, although little maintenance is anticipated.

K. Attach a list of your projects listing their county location and edit the map of Minnesota on the next page to show each project as a symbol.

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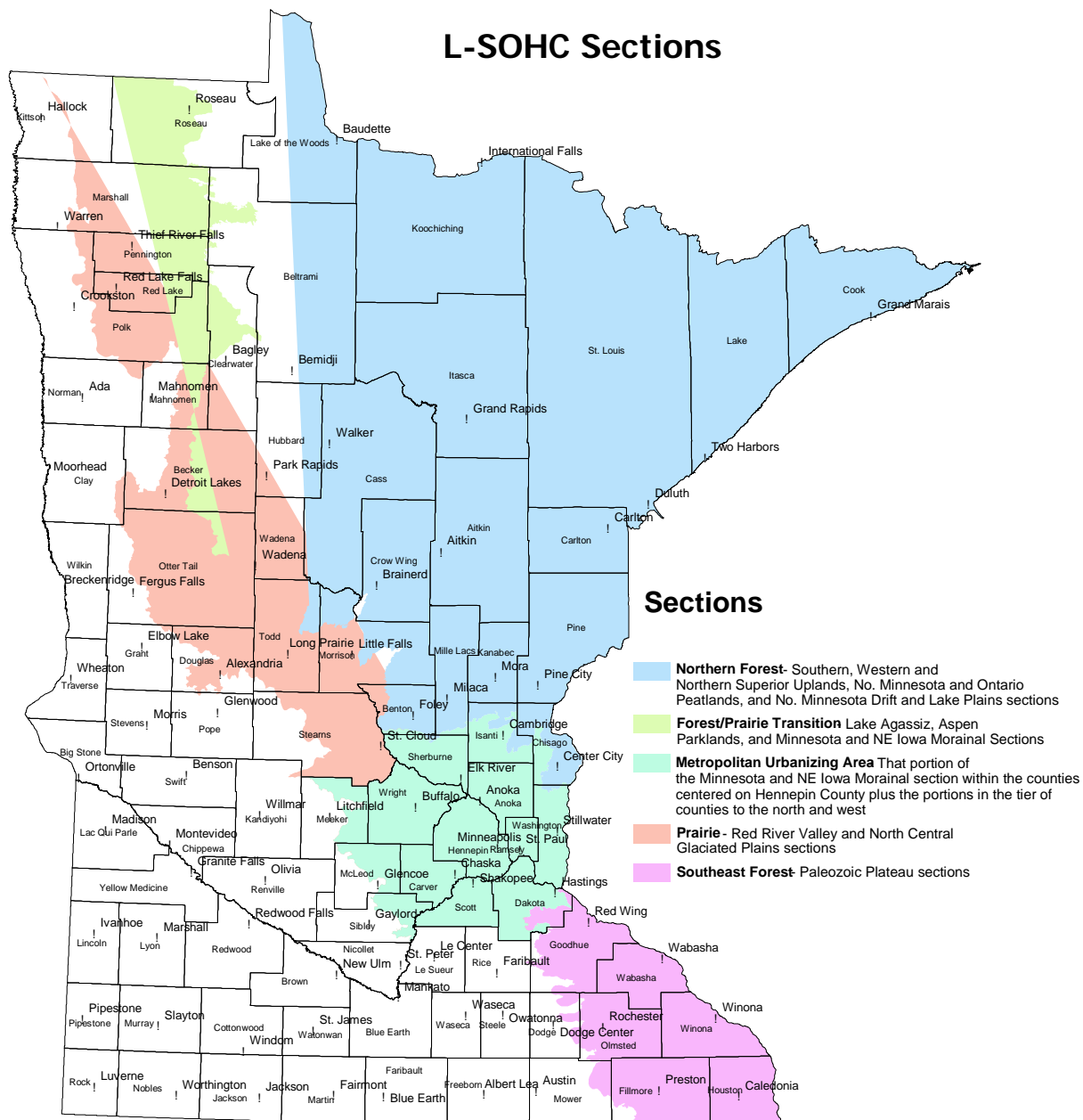
Specific locations will be determined at a later date. NWTF will identify potential participants (landowners) with the help of the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

Double left click to bring up the map editor. Symbols should be on the left side of the pop-up banner at the top of your screen.

If you can't bring up the interactive map editor follow these instructions:

1. Make a paper copy of the map,
2. By hand place symbols on the map corresponding to the location of the projects in your proposal,
3. Scan the marked map to a pdf, and
4. Insert the marked pdf map as the last page in your submission.

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