

**Request for Funding Form
Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
Fiscal Year 2010**

Program or Project Title: Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program in Minnesota: Protecting Our Investment.

Date: 10/29/2009

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	Council Funding Request	Out-Year Projections of Needs		
Funds Requested (\$000s)	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Outdoor Heritage Fund	\$6,865,000	0	0	0

A. Summary: Pheasants Forever (PF) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will cooperate to permanently restore and protect approximately 1,000 acres of grassland and 400 acres of wetland 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.

B. Background Information: 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 restoration needs or the backlog of willing sellers.

If funded, this proposal will accelerate the protection and restoration of Minnesota's valuable wetland and grassland habitats. Upon notification of project approval PF will review tracts identified and prioritized through the Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model and complete landowner contacts, appraisals, and purchase agreements. At closing, all tracts will be deeded to the Service as WPAs. Wetlands will be restored, cropped uplands and seeded pastures will be planted to native prairie seed mixes, and existing habitats will be managed with prescribed fire and other management tools to increase diversity and reduce non-native and invasive species.

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Approximately 1,000 acres of grassland and 400 acres of wetland will be restored, permanently protected and actively managed for wildlife and wildlife habitat. Acquisition will occur within 18 months of project approval and habitat restorations will normally be completed within two years of title transfer depending somewhat on the complexity of required restorations and the condition of the seedbed.

Acquired lands will be managed as WPAs and open for public recreational uses including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. This project will become part of the Waterfowl Production Area program that has successfully protected similar habitats in Minnesota for over 50 years.

What is the problem or opportunity being addressed? 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.

What action will be taken? Approximately 1,000 acres of grassland and 400 acres of wetland will be acquired, restored, permanently protected and made available for appropriate public recreational uses including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

Who will take action and when? PF and the Service will work together to acquire these lands within 18 months after funding is made available.

How will you coordinate this program with the other Constitutional Funding? We are not aware of any other Constitutional Funding received by PF or the Service that is related to the acquisitions or restorations described in this request.

What specific habitat changes will occur if this item is funded? Be specific about and list multiple benefits if they exist. If funded, this proposal will add approximately 1,400 acres of publically accessible wildlife lands that will be specifically managed for waterfowl production and other natural resource protection and conservation purposes. Croplands will be seeded to native seed mixes and drained wetlands will be restored. Unbroken uplands tracts will be managed (primarily through prescribed burns) to increase diversity and reduce non-native invasive species.

When do you expect to see these habitat changes? The majority of habitat restoration actions will be completed by the Service and its partners no later than two years after title transfer.

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

_____ YES

 X NO

If not, how will you finance completion? LSOHC grant money will be directly utilized for the purchase of land and the restoration of wetlands and grasslands. Additional funds originating from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps, Service budgets, local sportsman's clubs, PF and concerned individuals will also be used to achieve the goals outlined in this proposal.

How will you pay for the maintenance of the accomplishments? Funds originating from annual Service budgets will finance 100% of all future expenses needed to additionally restore, maintain, manage, and make Refuge Revenue sharing payments for these lands.

How does this action directly restore, enhance, or protect prairies, wetlands, forests or habitat for fish, game, and wildlife? Approximately 1,000 acres of grassland and 400 acres of wetland will be acquired, restored, permanently protected and actively managed for wildlife and wildlife habitat.

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. All lands acquired with LSOHC funding will be managed and permanently protected as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

How will you ensure transparency and provide information about your work and use of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars. Informational requests made by the Lessard-Sams OHC will be dealt with immediately. All actions accomplished by the partnership associated with this grant are open for public review.

Why will this strategy work? 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 Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (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.

Who might make decisions that assist or work against achieving the expected impact program? All lands acquired with grant funds will be purchased from willing sellers. Local conservation organizations will assist in the restoration of wetland and grassland habitat on these properties. Once acquired, the Service will make a one-time Trust Fund payment to the County where the property is located. In addition, the Service will make annual Refuge Revenue Sharing payments for all fee lands within the respective Counties.

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

_____ YES

 X NO

Because of the uncertainties inherent in funding and willing seller decisions, none of the potential purchases described in this application have been formally brought to the attention of local government officials. County Boards will however, be notified of all pending acquisitions prior to closing.

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

_____ YES

 X NO

Occasionally properties identified as priorities for acquisition contain easements within fee acquisition delineation boundaries. In these cases LSOHC dollars will be used per guidance provided by the LSOHC and the contract agreement.

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

_____ YES _____ NO X NA

If Yes what kind of use?

Easement acquisition is not part of this grant request.

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

_____ YES _____ NO X NA

Easement acquisition is not part of this grant request.

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

_____ Years

Lands that are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System will be managed primarily for the benefit of wildlife in perpetuity.

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

☐ Northern Forest

☒ Forest/Prairie Transition

☐ Southeast Forest

☒ Prairie

☒ Metropolitan Urbanizing Area

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

☒ YES

☐ NO

If yes, please explain.

The Service currently has a backlog of private landowners interested in selling their land to the federal government for wildlife purposes. Our current land acquisition budget cannot keep up with this demand. As such, there is an urgency to make offers to these willing landowners.

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

☐ YES

☒ NO

If Yes, list the names of the AMAs, 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?**

☒ YES

☐ NO

If yes explain the model briefly.

The lands to be acquired and restored through this grant request were delineated and prioritized by the PF and the Service utilizing the Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model and other tools described below.

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

The essence of the Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation is that you: 1) accomplish landscape level planning based on quantifiable objectives, 2) implement planned actions, then, 3) evaluate your actions to see if they are addressing your objectives. This is what our HAPET office in Fergus Falls does for the Service and our partners in the prairies of Minnesota. The Service's HAPET office does landscape level planning to meet specific wildlife objectives and conducts evaluation activities (i.e. 4sq.mi. surveys), to see if we/partners activities are meeting our objectives. The planned actions to be implemented through this grant application are the acquisition and restoration of converted wetland and grassland habitats. Based on HAPET evaluation strategies, modeling predictions can be made on the numbers of nesting waterfowl, grassland nesting birds, and pheasants the acres affected by this grant application will produce. Besides the obvious wildlife benefits, once restored, the lands acquired through this grant will provide additional water quality, groundwater recharge, and flood abatement benefits.

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

Using landscape level planning tools produced by the Service's HAPET office in Fergus Falls, geographic areas of the state are prioritized base on the presence/absence of existing/restorable wetland and grassland habitat. Once geographic areas are identified, land managers within those areas evaluate what habitats (and where), are needed to enhance specific wildlife populations. A suite of habitat restoration/land acquisition (i.e. private lands habitat restoration, easements, fee acquisition, other government private lands programs), tools are evaluated to identify what specifically is needed in a geographic area. If fee title land acquisition is needed, tracts offered by willing sellers are evaluated and ranked based on their ability to provide the resources needed in specific geographic areas. Many properties are eliminated at this time and others are forwarded for fee acquisition

C. Relationship to the *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.

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This proposal will protect and restore over 1,400 acres on tracts adjacent to or in close proximity to other previously purchased and restored State and Federal wildlife management areas.

Accomplishments specifically addressing habitat recommendation in the *Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan* include:

1. *Protect priority land habitats.* This proposal contains priority grassland and wetland habitats important to waterfowl, grassland, and wetland birds as well as the myriad species that call grasslands and wetlands home.
2. *Protect critical shorelines of rivers and lakes.* Several of the potential acquisitions will protect and enhance the shorelines and associated uplands of shallow lakes and wetlands.
3. *Improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation.* All tracts acquired will be restored to productive wildlife habitat and will be open for hunting and other compatible conservation oriented activities.
4. *Restore and protect shallow lakes.* Dependent on the decisions of current property owners (land will only be purchased from willing sellers) several tracts offer the potential to acquire key in-holdings or locations adjacent to other wildlife areas that will finally permit long delayed large scale restoration projects.
5. *Keep water on the landscape.* By protecting and restoring wetlands and grasslands this proposal will return water to the landscape via permanent wetland restorations and help keep water on the landscape through permanent vegetation restoration.

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D. Budget

Budget Item	Fiscal Year 10	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12
Personnel		\$65,000	
Contracts		\$400,	
Equipment/Tools/Supplies			
Fee Acquisition		\$5,200,000	
Easement Acquisition			
Easement Stewardship			
Professional Services			
Travel			
Additional Budget Items			
Restoration : Upland		\$1,000,000	
Restoration: Wetland		\$ 200,000	
TOTAL		\$6,865,000	

for appraisals and land surveys

E. Personnel Details:

Title	Name	Amount.
PF Sr. Field Coordinator		\$20,000
PF Regional Staff (2)		\$30,000
PF Director of Public Finance		\$15,000

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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
Federal Duck Stamp Funds (USFWS)	\$5,000,000		
Pheasants Forever	\$150,	\$50,	
USFWS	\$100,	\$100,	
USFWS			\$400,
Sub-totals	\$5,250,00	\$150,000	\$400,000
TOTAL All Years	\$5,800,000		

contribution for grassland restoration and land acquisition. The source of these funds may include PF chapter funds, other non-state partner funds, documented donations of land value, leveraged federal funds (e.g. North American Wetland Conservation Act funding), and any other sources of non-state funding that become available to achieve the habitat outcomes outlined in this proposal.

in-kind contribution of Realty staff support to acquire new WPAs.

in-kind contribution of funds and staff to post, provide public parking, manage, and improve habitat on newly acquired WPAs.

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

USFWS: Accelerating the WPA Program in MN

Table 1 Accomplish- ments	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Total Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore	<i>400 Acres</i>	<i>1,000 Acres</i>		<i>1,400 Acres</i>
Protect	<i>400 Acres</i>	<i>1,000 Acres</i>		<i>1,400 Acres</i>
Enhance				

Table 2 Sections Impacted and Impact Quantifier	Wetlands	Prairies	Fore sts	Total Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore	<i>300 Prairie Acres</i>	<i>800 Prairie Acres</i>		<i>1,100 Acres</i>
Protect	<i>300 Prairie Acres</i>	<i>800 Prairie Acres</i>		<i>1,100 Acres</i>
Enhance				
Restore	<i>80 F/P Transition Acres</i>	<i>160 F/P Transition Acres</i>		<i>240 Acres</i>
Protect	<i>80 F/P Transition Acres</i>	<i>160 F/P Transition Acres</i>		<i>240 Acres</i>
Enhance				
Restore	<i>20 Metro Urban. Area Acres</i>	<i>40 Metro Urban. Area Acres</i>		<i>60 Acres</i>
Protect	<i>20 Metro Urban. Area Acres</i>	<i>40 Metro Urban. Area Acres</i>		<i>60 Acres</i>
TOTAL	<i>400 ACRES</i>	<i>1,000 ACRES</i>		<i>1,400 Acres</i>

Table 3 Recommend Fund Allocation	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore	<i>\$220,000</i>	<i>\$1,045,000</i>		
Purchase/Protect	<i>\$1,600,000</i>	<i>\$4,000,000</i>		
Enhance				
TOTAL	<i>\$1,820,000</i>	<i>\$5,045,000</i>		

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Table 4 Leverage \$	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore	<i>\$100,000</i>	<i>\$700,000</i>		
Protect	<i>\$1,500,000</i>	<i>\$3,500,000</i>		
Enhance				
TOTAL	<i>\$1,600,000</i>	<i>\$4,200,000</i>		

Table 5 Acquisition Data	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Total Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability				
Acquired in Fee without State PILT Liability				
	<i>400 Acres</i>	<i>1,000 Acres</i>		<i>1,400 Acres</i>
Permanent Easement				

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	Completion Date	Measure
Identify priority acquisitions.	10/01/2009.	25 willing sellers identified & tracts ranked.
Contract appraisals ordered.	10/01/2010.	15 appraisals ordered
Purchase agreements.	02/01/2011.	10 options signed
Re-evaluate tract priority.	02/15/2011	10 tracts selected & ranked
Contract appraisals ordered.	03/01/2011.	5 appraisals ordered
Purchase agreements.	06/01/2011.	3 options signed
Restoration actions initiated.	06/01/2011.	Restored wetlands and uplands
Close on optioned tracts.	09/01/2011	1,400 purchased
Wetland restorations completed.	09/01/2012	400 acres restored
Upland restorations completed.	09/01/2013	1,000 acres restored

I. Relationship to Your Current Budget:

Outdoor Heritage Funds will be used to augment the limited land acquisition funds received by the Service.

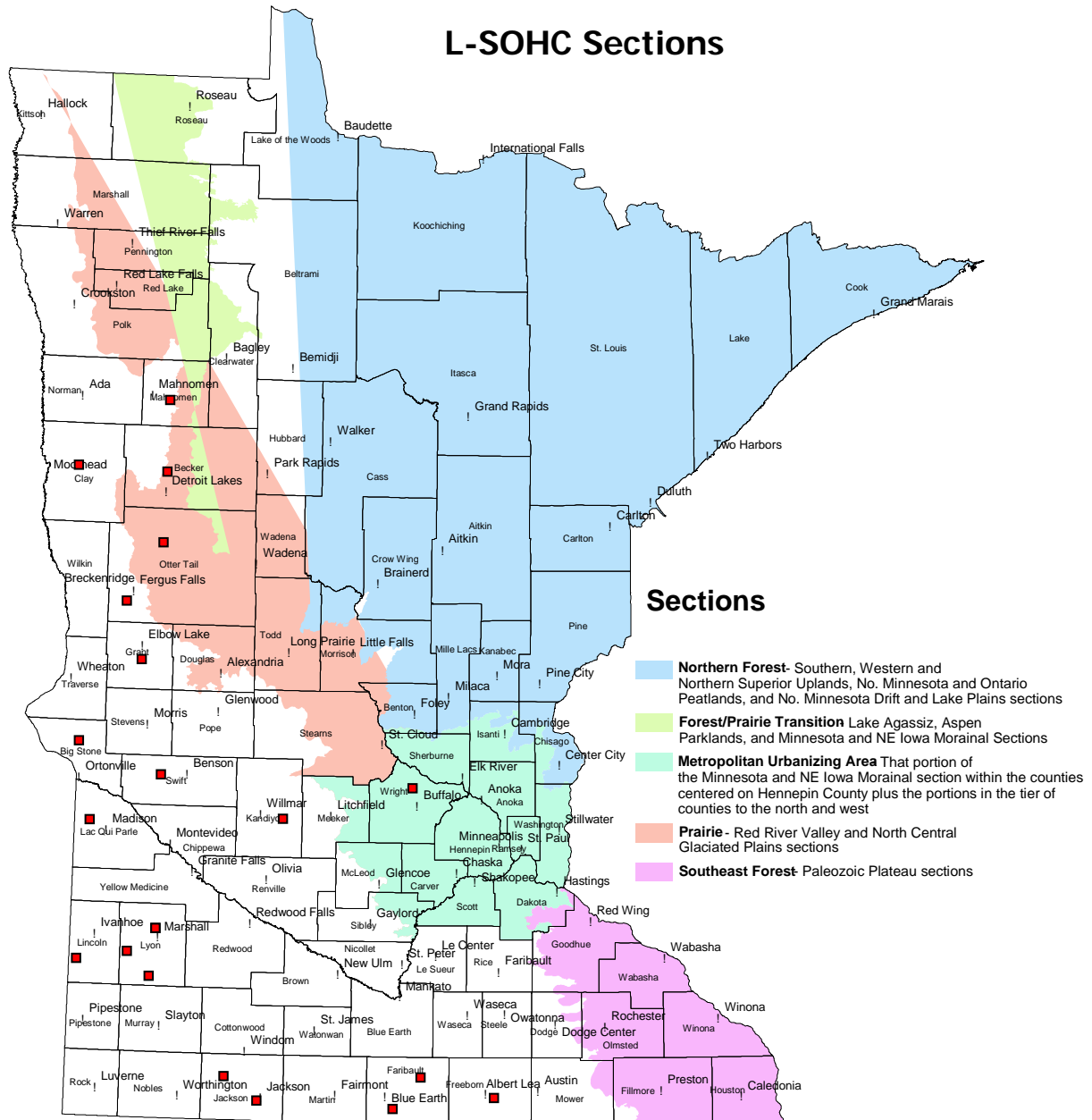
J. How Will the Habitat Improvements Be Sustained?

All grant monies received for this project will result in fee title transfers of additional land 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.

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.

The majority of the privately owned lands identified below as targeted for acquisition are marginally or poorly productive row cropped uplands interspersed with partially drained wetlands. These tracts were selected because they offer excellent potential for upland and wetland restoration or connect or augment existing State or Federal fee areas. A few tracts represent unbroken, undrained areas or represent key locations that will allow restoration of large or complex restorations.

**Please note that software errors have distorted the delineation and shading of L-SOHC Sections on the map below.*



Locations of priority acquisition areas. Because all properties are being purchased from willing sellers, some variation from these delineated targets will occur.