

Program Title: Prairie Heritage Fund

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

Program or Project Title: # 38 Prairie Heritage Fund

Date: 11/02/09

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	Council Funding Request	Out-Year Projections of Needs		
Funds Requested (\$000s)	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
Outdoor Heritage Fund	4,000,000	0	0	0

A. Summary: Our proposal will protect 1,200 acres of prairie grassland and wetland habitat and native remnant prairie (if available) as state wildlife management areas (WMA). In addition, this proposal will restore or enhance acquired prairie grasslands and wetlands and provide significant, quality public recreation opportunities for the citizens of Minnesota.

B. Background Information

- 1. What is the problem or opportunity being addressed?** Less than 1% of Minnesota's native prairie remains, and grassland habitat losses are cited as the primary reason for population declines of breeding waterfowl, grassland birds, and other wildlife species. Minnesota is also seeing significant grassland habitat loss through expirations out of USDA's Conservation Reserve Program, and pressures due to development, wind, mining and other threats. In addition, it is well-documented that grassland-associated wetland habitats have also been lost and severely degraded. This proposal seeks to build upon existing investments in permanently protected prairie grassland and wetland habitat. The goal is to improve the form and function of these habitat complexes through protection, restoration, and enhancement of grasslands and wetlands.

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2. **What action will be taken?** We will permanently protect 1,200 acres of prairie grasslands and wetlands.
3. **Who will take action and when?** Pheasants Forever, in cooperation with the Minnesota DNR, will acquire 1,200 acres during the project period. We will strive to achieve this work within 12-months, however due to complexities beyond our control, believe an 18-month window will be adequate to complete established outcomes.
4. **How will you coordinate this program with the other Constitutional Funding?** The work proposed here is distinct from any other funding sources. Committed leverage funds are non-state in origin. Any stateside funding sources should they be used, would be split out, accounted for separately and not considered part of our leverage effort.
5. **What specific habitat changes will occur if this item is funded? Be specific about and list multiple benefits if they exist.**
We will add approximately 1,200 acres of prairie grassland and wetland habitats, building upon existing investments in habitat. The lands would be open to the public for hunting, and managed for grassland/wetland species, resource protection and other consistent conservation efforts. Croplands will be seeded to diverse Minnesota native seed mixes and drained wetlands will be restored. Native remnant prairies that are acquired would be managed with prescribed fire or grazing, depending upon what is most suitable for the site.
6. **When do you expect to see these habitat changes?**
Habitat restoration and enhancement on newly acquired tracts will be completed by PF in cooperation with the DNR Area Managers through the initial development plan process and per LSOHC and contract specifications. We expect that the majority of this work will be complete no later than two years after the property is acquired.
7. **Will your Outdoor Heritage Fund dollar request complete the planned accomplishments?**

☐ YES

☒ NO

If not, how will you finance completion?

Non-state funds committed as leverage will assist with the acquisition, restoration and enhancement of acquired lands. Sources of funding would likely include PF Chapter contributions, other partner contributions, donations of land value, other non-state funding sources (e.g. North American Wetlands Conservation Act or National Fish and Wildlife Foundation).

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- 8. How will you pay for the maintenance of the accomplishments?** Lands will be enrolled into the state Wildlife Management Area System and managed in perpetuity by the Minnesota DNR. PF will work with the DNR Area Staff to create initial development plans for each parcel, and provide funding via this proposal for past and current LSOHC acquired properties to bring them into the WMA system with the initial habitat and site development needs being met. Long-term management of the properties will be completed by the Minnesota DNR and its partners.
- 9. How does this action directly restore, enhance, or protect prairies, wetlands, forests or habitat for fish, game, and wildlife?** Approximately 1,200 acres of prairie grassland and wetland habitat will be permanently protected. Acquisition will be followed up with the appropriate habitat restoration and enhancement work being completed directly on those acquired acres.
- 10. 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 to be restored or enhanced under this proposal will be state Wildlife Management Areas.

- 11. How will you ensure transparency and provide information about your work and use of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars.** We will provide an accomplishment plan for approval that will include a project list. In addition, all properties acquired will be open to the public for hunting and other activities consistent with the state WMA system. We look forward to sharing with the citizens of Minnesota our accomplishments in concert with the LSOHC.
- 12. Why will this strategy work?** We currently have a backlog of priority projects to be considered for the Wildlife Management Area System. Several projects on our list are carryover from PF's approved 2010 accomplishment plan, and have been added to this proposal due to the fact that our funds are largely obligated for our FY10 Prairie Heritage Fund grant recommended by the LSOHC. PF's network of 76 Minnesota chapters and 24,000 members have been actively involved in protecting and restoring lands in partnership with the Minnesota DNR for 27-years.

We also state that we are building upon existing investments in the WMA system and permanently protected habitats. To that end, 23 of the 25 potential projects on our list are additions to existing WMA's and all projects have been developed in consultation with the local DNR managers. Additionally, DNR Commissioner approval will be received for any funded project under this proposal.

13. Who might make decisions that assist or work against achieving the expected impact program? DNR Commissioner approval is required, so all projects will be reviewed by the entity responsible for the long-term management of the property. Each project is done in consultation with the DNR area staff to evaluate potential projects for inclusion in the WMA system. All projects that are completed will be with willing sellers. County boards will be notified before closing of the intent to donate lands to the Minnesota DNR for enrollment into the WMA system.

14. If this is acquisition of land, has the local government formally approved the acquisition? PF will follow LSOHC and contract guidance to ensure that County Boards are appropriately notified of projects within their counties and the intent to donate lands to the DNR for enrollment into the Wildlife Management Area System.

_____ **YES**

___X___ **NO**

15. If this is fee simple acquisition of land, is the land free of any other permanent protection such as a conservation easement? Many properties are accepted into the WMA with permanent conservation easements already in place on a portion of the property. PF will follow LSOHC and DNR contract guidance as it relates to parcels with portions protected with perpetual conservation easements.

_____ **YES**

___X___ **NO**

16. 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?

17. 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**

18. If you are proposing funding for a new or ongoing program how long into the future do you expect this program to operate? Lands protected under this proposal would be enrolled in perpetuity into the State Wildlife Management Area System. A notice of grant restrictions will be recorded on properties at the time of closing to protect the investment of the LSOHC in permanent habitat protection.

____ Perpetual ____ Years

19. 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

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

☒ YES

____ NO

If yes, please explain. PF has a backlog of projects for inclusion into the WMA system. Opportunities to build on quality permanent prairie habitat and recreational opportunities will be lost if not funded.

21. 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. This proposal will restore and/or enhance acres on projects acquired under this proposal or the funded FY10 Prairie Heritage Fund grant recommended by LSOHC. Project lists are available and habitat restoration and enhancement activities will be determined in consult with DNR Area staff through the Initial Development Plan process following LSOHC and DNR contract requirements.

22. 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. All projects proposed are approved by the DNR at the Commissioner, regional, and area level, and meet the goals and intent of the Wildlife Management Area System. We strive to build upon existing investments in habitat, thus adding form and function to prairie grassland/wetland habitat complexes already on the ground. We like the

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concept of developing high quality 'Grassland Bird Conservation Area' (GBCA's) on the landscape in a step by step approach to restoring functioning grassland habitats in areas of Minnesota that have been converted. More information about GBCA's can be found at [://www.fws.gov/midwest/HAPET/GrasslandBirdMaps](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/HAPET/GrasslandBirdMaps).

23. Explain the scientific foundation for your project, and the benefits it will produce. By building upon existing investments in habitat or starting a new unit with promise for expansion, we can improve upon the function of past investments in prairie grassland bird conservation. By doing so, we help to create higher functioning habitat complexes for grassland birds and other wildlife species that call grasslands and wetlands home. We must understand that the degradation and conversion of grassland and wetland habitats across much of the agricultural portion of the state has been significant and took place over roughly 150 years. Restoring function to the landscape will take significant effort, resources, and time. Our aim is to add resources and effort in a manner that builds towards a future of habitat complexes that function for grassland and wetland birds.

24. How do you set priorities? (*Be sure to list the criteria you use and the weight you give each one.*) Each project is evaluated using a combination of the following criteria.

1. Does the parcel fit the objectives of the wildlife management area system?
2. Does the parcel build upon existing grassland/wetland habitats?
3. Does the parcel add value to the existing grassland/wetland habitats (e.g. does it increase function)?
4. Are there significant habitat features? (e.g. shoreline, riparian, remnant prairie, wetland restoration potential, outlet structure access, grassland enhancement/restoration potential, does it connect habitats)
5. Are there significant or unique plant or animal communities that would be protected/enhanced (e.g. County Biological Survey site)?
6. Are there other important benefits to Minnesota (e.g. water quality, access, etc)

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

The *Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan* calls for protecting priority lands. This proposal will protect and restore priority grassland habitats important to grassland birds as well as the myriad species that call grasslands home. The accomplishments

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proposed under this proposal will also contribute to the follow habitat recommendations outlined in the *Plan*:

1. Protect priority land habitats – this proposal contains priority grassland habitats important to pheasants, waterfowl, grassland and wetland birds as well as the myriad species that call grasslands home. Native remnant prairie tracts will receive priority.
2. Protect critical shorelands of rivers and lakes – there are potential projects that if completed will protect shoreline of shallow lakes or contribute to better water quality of those lakes contained within this proposal.
3. Improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation - All lands acquired and restored will be open to the public for hunting and other activities allowed under the WMA or WPA systems.
4. Restore and protect shallow lakes - there are potential projects that include protection of shallow lakes shoreline contained within this proposal as well as build upon grassland and wetland habitats near shallow lake habitats.
5. Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds – this proposal protects and restores grasslands (likely wetlands too as you cannot separate the two in much of prairie region of Minnesota). A majority of the lands purchased will be prior-converted marginal farmlands.
6. Keep water on the landscape – by protecting and restoring grasslands, the work of this proposal will help keep water on the landscape through permanent vegetation restoration and permanent wetland restoration. Several riparian, wetland, and lakeshore protection and restoration accomplishments are possible and are included in the project list.

Minnesota DNR Long-range plan for the ring-necked pheasant in Minnesota cites secure, undisturbed nesting cover as a primary limiting factor for pheasant populations. This proposal contributes 1,200 acres to the plan goal of restoring 1,560,000 acres of habitat (grassland and wetland) within the pheasant range of Minnesota.

Minnesota DNR *Long-range Duck Recovery Plan* has priority goals for long term protection and restoration of wetland and grassland habitat for duck production. This proposal will contribute 1,100-acres to the 2,000,000 acre goal set under the plan. Specifically it will permanently protect and/or restore wetlands towards the 600,000-acre wetland goal and permanently protect and/or restore grasslands towards the 1,400,000-acre grassland goal

This proposal contributes to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan by contributing 1,100 acres of breeding habitat (prairie grasslands and wetlands) to the 11.8 million acres goal to restore continental waterfowl populations. Most of the work proposed will occur within the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture which is recognized as a national priority for wetland and grassland habitat and breeding waterfowl and grassland bird species.

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D. Budget

Budget Item	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
Personnel	40,000	20,000	
Contracts	500,000		
Equipment/Tools/Supplies			
Fee	2,440,000	1,000,000	
Easement Acquisition			
Easement Stewardship			
Professional Services			
Travel			
Additional Budget Items			
TOTAL	2,980,000	1,020,000	

¹ Fee acquisition includes all costs to acquire the property including but not limited to closing costs, title examination, survey, etc.

E. Personnel Details: Only documented, direct to project personnel costs are requested.

Title	Name	Amount.
Director of Conservation Programs		\$ 35,000
Regional Staff		\$ 15,000
Director of Public Finance (national office grant department)		\$ 10,000

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F. All Leverage

Source of Leverage	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
	500,000	200,000	
TOTAL	500,000	200,000	

1 – Source of PF leverage would likely include PF Chapter contributions, documented donations in land value, other local partner contributions (e.g. Sportsman's Clubs), federal funding (e.g. North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and other non-state funding sources.

G. Outcomes:

Table 1 Accomplish- ments	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				
Protect	200	1,000		
Enhance				

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Table Sections Impacted and Impact Quantifier	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				
Protect	75– Metro/Urban	80- Metro/Urban		
Enhance				
Restore				
Protect	17-Transition	300- Transition		
Enhance				
Restore				
Protect	20 – SE Forest	300 – SE Forest		
Enhance				
Restore				
Protect	5 – N Forest	35 – N Forest		
Enhance				
Restore				
Protect	97 – Prairies	1,650 - Prairies		
Enhance				

1 - This table represents the universe of potential projects. At proposal time, we are unsure of which projects will be completed and which projects will fall off, so it is difficult to input meaningful numbers here.

Table 3 Recommend Fund Allocation	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore	100,000	400,000		
Protect	640,000	2,800,000		
Enhance				

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Table 4 Leverage \$	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore		50,000		
Protect	50,000	600,000		
Enhance				

Table 5 Acquisition Data	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability	200	1,000		
Acquired in Fee without State PILT Liability				
Permanent Easement				

H. Accomplishment Time Table:

Milestone	Date	Measure
Identify priority acquisitions.	09/01/2010	DNR approved projects with willing sellers identified
Contract appraisals ordered.	09/01/2010.	10 appraisals ordered
Purchase agreements.	11/01/2011.	Options signed
Re-evaluate tract priority.	01/15/2011	Additional tracts selected
Contract appraisals ordered.	01/15/2011.	5 appraisals ordered
Purchase agreements.	06/01/2011.	Options signed
Restoration actions initiated.	06/01/2011.	Wetland & upland restoration initiated w/ DNR IDP in cooperation with PF
Close on optioned tracts.	09/01/2011	1,200 acres acquired
Wetland restorations completed.	11/30/2011	Acquired acres restored
Upland restorations completed.	11/30/2011	Acquired acres restored

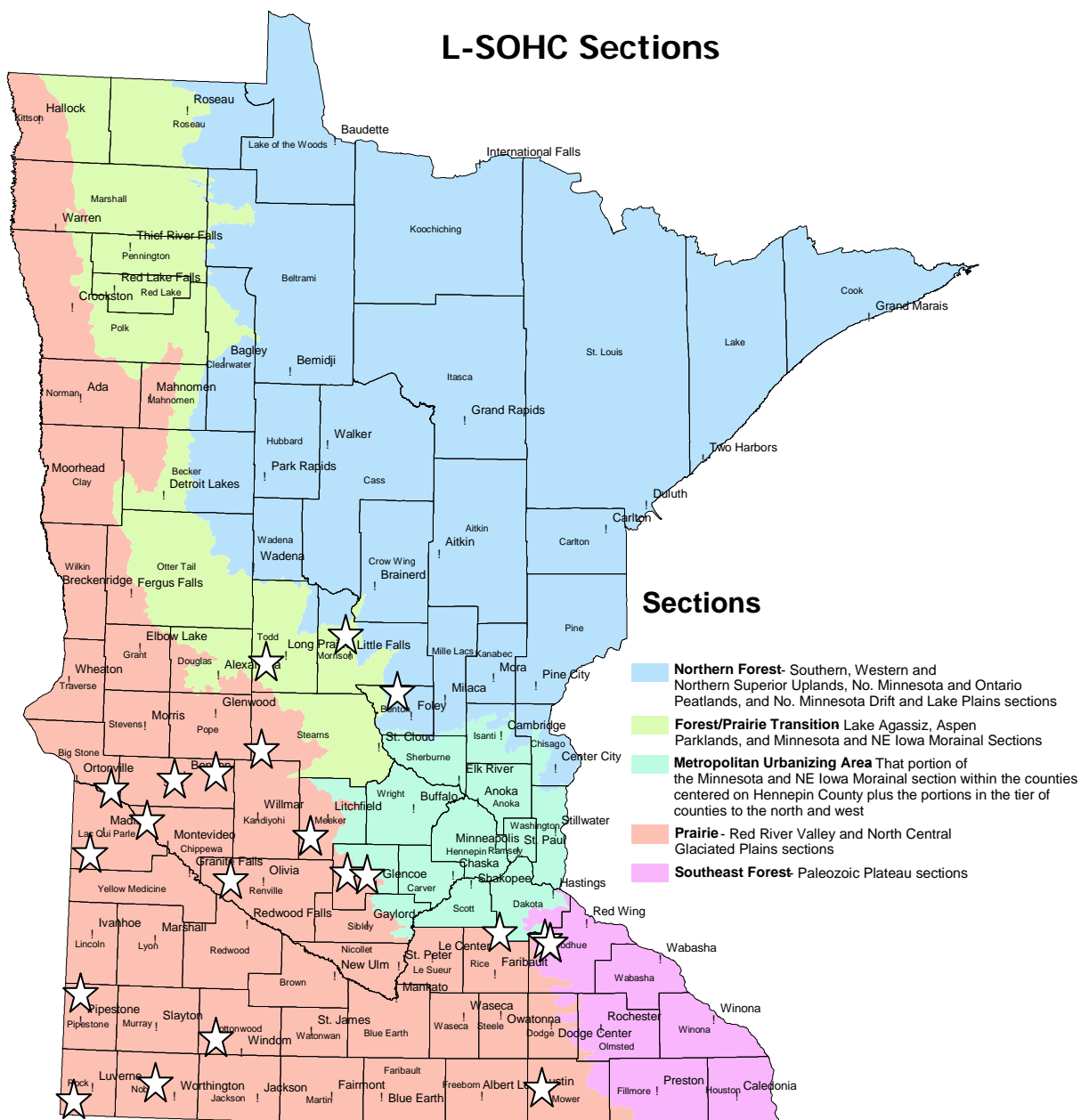
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I. Relationship to Your Current Budget: This proposal is an acceleration of WMA acquisition and restoration budget.

J. How Will the Habitat Improvements Be Sustained? All lands will be enrolled into the state Wildlife Management Area system and will be managed in perpetuity by the Minnesota DNR.

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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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Potential Project List – FY2011 Prairie Heritage Fund

Potential Project Name	County	Zone
Lac Qui Parle WMA Addition	Big Stone	P
Benderberg WMA Addition	Chippewa	P
Florida Creek WMA Addition	Lac Qui Parle	P
Darling WMA	Morrison	T
Dybsand WMA Addition	Renville	P
Camp Kerk WMA Addition	Swift	P
TBA WMA (Platt Lake)	Todd	T
Wieker WMA Addition	Meeker	P
Graham WMA Addition	Benton	F
Winter WMA Addition	Pipestone	P
Talcot Lake WMA Addition	Cottonwood	P
Tamarack WMA Addition	Stearns	P
Clair Rollings West WMA Addition	Swift	P
Mill Pond WMA Addition	Mower	P
BlueBird Preserve WMA Addition	Nobles	P
Ras-Lyn WMA Addition	McLeod	P
Warsaw WMA Tract 2	Goodhue	SE
Warsaw WMA Tract 3	Goodhue	SE
Phasianus WMA Addition	McLeod	P
Roscoe WMA Addition	Goodhue	SE
Chub Lake WMA Addition	Dakota	M
Rock River WMA Addition	Rock	P