

L-SOHC Questionnaire

Program Request Title: Green Corridor Legacy Program – Program ID #9

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A. REQUEST FOR FUNDING OVERVIEW:

1. Why there is an urgent need to act NOW?

All of the current landowners are willing and supportive of the goals and mission of the Green Corridor Legacy Program but have expressed concern that if the Green Corridor Legacy Program goes unfunded that they will need to then sell these properties on the open market for commercial and/or private development purposes.

Also, all of the tracts have one or more multiple habitat features such as; significant remnant prairie, granite outcroppings, gravel/sand mining potential, shallow lakes and associated wetlands, extensive MN River shoreline, and timber that could be lost to commercial operations or private development if not protected now. Also the American Badger (a species of greatest conservation need) inhabit the region near several of these proposed properties which is threaten by continuing gravel mining operations.

Finally, all of the proposed tracts are a vital part of a planned attempt to protect and restore natural resource habitat features that would create new and/or expand complexes or corridors of wildlife habitat adjacent or near existing state-owned lands like WMA/AMA/SNA.

B. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT FOR PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

1. Tell the Council how much of your proposal is acquisition and how much restoration/enhancement?

Acquisition (fee title & professional services)	= \$3,820,500 or 92%
Restoration (propagation project & initial WMA/AMA rehab)	= \$257,835 or 6%
Administration (over 2 years & as a \$4.165 million request)	= \$85,000 or 2%

2. How will the public be able to use the all the projects in this program and enjoy the benefits of this public investment?

Accomplishment #1: This proposal is requesting funding to acquire six (6) different properties totaling 840 acres. All properties will be developed as DNR Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) and/or Aquatic Management Areas (AMA) which are opened to public use for various forms of outdoor recreation such as; hunting, trapping, fishing, and wildlife observation.

Accomplishment #2: This proposal will develop a local or eco-region based native prairie seed propagation program which will collect native prairie seeds from regional remnant native prairie tracts (mostly from Scientific Natural Areas - SNA). The seeds collected will then be grown in a controlled environment then transplanted to land managed by the DNR for further development and cultivation. The harvested seeds will then be used to restore and/or enhance future WMA, AMA, and SNA projects sites in the program area. We see this seed propagation as a model program for use in other eco-regions of the state and we will share program details with other agencies or non-profit groups wishing to institute a similar program

C. PRIORITIES

1. Specifically, how does your program address the Council's statewide and/or regional priorities?

The Green Corridor Legacy Program is an “ongoing program” and a continuation of the LSOHC FY2010 appropriation for the LSOHC Prairie Sub-state Region.

This program will produce multiple conservation benefits by protecting and restoring multiple natural resource features such as; remnant native prairie complexes, wetlands, shallow lakes, riparian areas, hardwood forest areas found along the bluffs of the MN River Valley, exposed granite outcrops (3.8 billion years old), significant (over one (1) mile) MN River shoreline, and other natural resource features.

This program has the financial support of a local wildlife conservation group with additional financial support pending from other groups.

All fee title acquisitions for this program will be developed as WMA and/or AMA and are open to public use for various outdoor recreational activities such as; hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation.

Many of the proposed program projects will protect habitat which addresses multiply species of conservation need and their associated habitats MN Wildlife Action Plan. These same habitats also benefit traditional game and fish species. The program will also protect several significant remnant prairie complexes and granite outcrops as identified in the Minnesota County Biological Survey maps. And uses science based planning and evaluation as explained in our Request for Funding proposal.

2. Tell the Council how do you set priorities among the opportunities available to this program? Be SPECIFIC

As spelled out in our original Request for Funding proposal we have four (4) primary categories we use to evaluate and prioritize program activities/opportunities. Within each category we evaluated or asked specific questions related to each category and assigned a scoring system to each questions. The primary category questions we ask to evaluate and prioritize are; does the activity/ opportunity provide wildlife/fisheries related recreation, protect water/land resources, provide biological diversity (multiple benefits), and will it provide significant consideration to urgency, conforms to strategies/outcomes in the multiple state conservation plans, and focuses on creation of habitat complexes

3. Tell the Council how you define “science-based strategic planning”

The Green Corridor Legacy Program uses the basic principles of “science-based strategic planning” which are; Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation as a basis for program development. The Green Corridor Legacy Program will continue to use existing state-wide wildlife conservation and strategic plans in partnership with our local and regional natural resource managers and conservation professionals to best achieve desired outcomes. These plans were developed through the most currently available science and the professional expertise of a broad range of wildlife and aquatic professionals. These plans, along with use of GIS technology, will be used to identify potential projects based on existing and potential habitat resources in the program area. This will allow for selection of acquisition tracts that maximize population responses for both game and nongame wildlife and numerous aquatic species.

Finally, the Green Corridor Legacy Program closely follows the DNR Region 4 Priority Focus Area which indentifies the Minnesota River and its tributaries as their highest or primary focus (when evaluated by all divisions of the DNR) for resource management, oversight, and protection.

D. PROGRAM DETAILS:

1. The Work

- a. **Enumerate the specific kinds of action you plan to take to protect, enhance, and/or restore natural systems.**

Protect = Acquire in fee title acquisition of WMA/AMA open to public use of six (6) properties totaling 840 acres. **One of these properties also protects over one (1) mile of critical MN River shoreline – approximately 5,700 ft.**

Restore= Restore 400 acres of native prairie habitat on the newly acquired WMA/AMA listed above. The balance of the acres of the newly acquired WMA/AMA is already in good to excellent habitat conditions.

Enhance= The regional or eco-based native prairie seed propagation project will restore and/or enhance in approximately the 3rd year between 200-300 acres of public lands (WMA/AMA/SNA). With even greater acreage in future years once a full integration of seed harvest is undertaken.

- b. **What species will be helped?** Deer, wild turkey, pheasants, waterfowl, small game animals, and many aquatic species like sturgeon, walleye, sauger, bass, and catfish. Some species of greatest conservation need are; American Badger, Common Night Hawk, American Woodcock, Brown Thresher, Loggerhead Shrike. More detailed information on all species that benefit by each specific project will be presented at our LSOHC presentation on 12/8/09.

- c. **Do you currently have the capacity to get the work done that you are requesting dollars for in FY 2011? -- Explain**

Absolutely – yes. We have demonstrated with previous program activities (LCCMR and LSOHC appropriations) that we have the capacity to achieve the measureable goals, objectives, and outcomes of this and future appropriations.

2. Program Work Location – Listed percentages are an approximation.

- a. **What percent of your work will be prairie?** 80% (note: to best answer this question we are categorizing some riparian areas as prairie rather than aquatic)
- b. **What percent of your work will be wetland?** 10%
- c. **What percent of your work will be forest?** 2%
- d. **What percent of your work will be aquatic systems?** 8%
- e. **Is it part of a larger habitat complex? If yes BRIEFLY describe the complex.**

Each individual fee title acquisition project is part of a **current or planned** complex or corridor of public land infrastructures like WMA, AMA, or SNA. By planning and developing habitat complexes or corridors of public infrastructures provides multiple benefits in both resource management (reduced cost to manage and oversee the land) and will provide multiple wildlife and aquatic benefits by providing large blocks of habitat which creates an ecological synergism by which game, wildlife, and aquatic species can flourish.

3. How We Plan to Use the Funds Requested

a. What percent reduction could you accept without rendering your project inoperable?

It is our first desire to see this program fully funded by the LSOHC. We consider many of these individual projects (fee title acquisitions) to be one time opportunities which could be lost if not funded. If decisions by the LSOHC have to be made for appropriation reductions, we would have to re-evaluate (based on multiple considerations) which projects would be excluded from this funding request. All proposed projects have merit and value for consideration at this time. Because most of our proposed projects are large tracts (over 160 acres) it's harder to split up appropriations.

The Green Corridor Legacy Program would accept whatever appropriations the LSOHC deems appropriate. We want to be viewed as a long term supportive partner in the overall mission, accomplishments, and successes of the LSOHC. A percentage reduction of 35% of the fee title portion of this appropriation request would acquire the most critical tracts of land. Again, we would accept whatever appropriations the LSOHC deems appropriate.

b. Have you also applied to the Outdoor Heritage Fund Conservation Partners Grant Program operated by DNR? No – We are supporting other local conservation/wildlife groups with this program.

c. Where else might you get money for this project?

The Green Corridor Legacy Program might be exploring opportunities with the USFWS small grants program and LCCMR. **Both these possibilities are a year or two out in the planning stages.** The Green Corridor Legacy Program will continue our efforts to solicit financial support from local wildlife and conservation groups. As with many non-profit groups, these groups are challenged with declining fundraising success primarily due to the current economic conditions.

4. Personnel Details

a. Describe the personnel duties. Are they office staff or field staff – existing or new positions?

Pat Dingels:

- Existing Office Staff: Executive Director of the Redwood Area Communities Foundation, a 501c3 nonprofit;
- Authorized representative for the Foundation;
- Direct day-to-day activities and assure compliance with non-profit requirements;
- Responsible for financial management of Green Corridor project;
- Secure auditing firm and provide audit information

Brad Cobb:

- Existing Office and Field Operations Staff – Program Manager
- Authorized representative of Green Corridor Inc. who reports to the Green Corridor Inc. Board of Directors.
- Directs and administers all day-to-day operations, coordination, and responsibilities to fulfill the obligations, requirements, and activities of the Green Corridor Legacy Program.