

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2012 Accomplishment Plan

Date: October 24, 2011

Program Title: Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program, Phase 4

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Funds Recommended: \$5,400,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2012, Ch. X, Art. X, Sec. X, Subd. 4 (b): *(to be completed when signed by Governor)*

Abstract:

This proposal accelerates the permanent protection of 935 acres of wetlands (235 acres) and grasslands (700 acres) as Waterfowl Production Areas open to public hunting in Minnesota.

Program Narrative

Design and Scope of 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 and restore previously converted wetland and grassland habitats on those properties. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and their partners have been employing this strategy for over 50-years with the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program (SWAP). This acceleration program acquires and restores 235 acres of wetland and 700 acres of grassland habitats which will be permanently protected as Waterfowl Protection Areas managed by the Service. Using landscape level planning tools [e.g. Thunderstorm Maps produced by the Service's Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET)], Pheasants Forever (PF) will acquire strategically identified properties. Based on HAPET evaluation strategies, modeling predictions can be made on the numbers of nesting waterfowl, grassland nesting birds, and other wildlife 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. These strategies are well tested and are supported by the greater conservation community here in Minnesota. Hunting and fishing stakeholders are very interested in increasing opportunities for hunting and fishing public access and have used WPA's extensively in the past. To address concerns related to the erosion of county tax revenues due to public land, the Service and PF will notify counties prior to acquisition of lands. 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.

Funding for restoration of the properties will be solicited from partners. If this funding is available, budgeted Outdoor Heritage restoration funds under this proposal would be able to accomplish additional fee title w/o PILT acquisition funds. Wetlands, on the properties acquired, will be restored by either surface ditch "plugs" or breaking sub-surface tile lines. Grasslands will be restored by planting appropriate native grasses and forbs to converted grassland habitats. Grassland restoration on individual tracts may take three to five years and involve one to two years of post acquisition farming to prepare the seed base, one year for seeding and one to two years to establish.

Planning

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 of habitats and wildlife populations.

Accomplishments specifically addressing habitat recommendations 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, prairie and wetland birds as well as the myriad species that call grasslands and wetlands home (H1, page 63).
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 (H2, page 67).
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. Proposed parcels adjacent to other WPAs and conservation lands (including state lands) will provide better connectivity and larger parcels for recreation access (H3, page 74).

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 (H4, page 78).
5. *Restore land, wetlands and wetland associated watersheds.* Lands purchased will focus on restoration of prairie grasslands, wetlands and their associated watersheds. Additions to existing WPAs and adjacent conservation lands include an emphasis on watershed protection and restoration (H5, page 80).
6. *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. Wetland and grassland restorations will also provide watershed storage for flood events (H7, page 84).

The lands to be acquired and restored through this grant request were delineated and prioritized by PF and the Service by considering the Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model and other tools. The essence of this approach is to: 1) accomplish landscape level planning based on quantifiable objectives, 2) implement planned actions, then, 3) evaluate actions to see if they are addressing the objectives. . 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 the activities are meeting the objectives. The planned actions to be implemented through this grant application are the acquisition and restoration of converted wetland and grassland habitats via an established land acquisition program.

These acquired lands will:

1. accelerate the protection, enhancement and restoration of wetland/upland complexes,
2. convert largely marginal agricultural land to wetlands/uplands
3. be restored or enhanced for wildlife
4. protect, restore, or enhance shallow lakes, shore lands, or other resources
5. prevent the conversion of expiring CRP lands

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds

The request for Outdoor Heritage Fund monies is the only state funding involved in this project. This project will leverage federal and partner funding to accelerate acquisition of grasslands and wetlands for WPAs. Federal funding and labor will be utilized to assist in acquisitions, restorations, annual operating funds and revenue sharing payments to counties there by relieving the state of PILT and future management funding needs. Partner funding including 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 will be used to augment the acquisition and restoration efforts on the parcels.

Relationship to Current Organizational Budget

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. The Service's Midwest

Region receives on average \$5,000,000 annually from duck stamp proceeds to purchase lands for WPAs. If funded, this proposal will accelerate the protection and restoration of Minnesota’s valuable wetland and grassland habitats and provide additional public hunting and fishing areas.

Sustainability and Maintenance

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, realty staff, 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.

Outcomes

Short-term and Intermediate Outcomes

- Agricultural lands are converted to grassland/wetland complexes resulting in net-gain of wildlife habitat. (450 acres of 935 proposed acquired acres converted)
- Improved access to public lands (935 additional acres of previously private lands protected and opened permanently for public access)

Long Term and End Results

This proposal is working towards a long term outcome of creating stable and/or increasing wildlife populations of game and non-game species while increasing opportunities for wildlife dependent recreation through an increase in permanently protected and publicly owned Waterfowl Production Areas.

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Milestone	Date completed
Identify priority acquisitions	15 willing sellers identified & tracts ranked	07/01/2012
Contract appraisals ordered	10 appraisals ordered	09/01/2012
Purchase agreements	7 options signed	02/01/2013
Re-evaluate tract priority	10 tracts selected & ranked	02/15/2013
Contract appraisals ordered	7 appraisals ordered	04/01/2013
Purchase agreements	5 options signed	07/01/2013
Close on optioned tracts	935 acres purchased	01/01/2014
Restoration completed	935 acres restored	06/30/2014

Attachments (*on spreadsheet workbook – 3 separate tabs*):

- A. Budget
- B. Proposed Outcome Tables
- C. Parcel List - *No Map is needed for the accomplishment plan*

Attachment A. Budget Spreadsheet

Name of Proposal:	Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program, Phase 4
Date:	24-Oct-11

[Link HERE to definitions of the budget items below.](#)

Total Amount of Request \$ 5,400,000 *From page 1 on the funding form.*

Personnel

Position breakdown here	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash		Total
				Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	
<i>PF Director of Conservation</i>	0.08	3	\$ 25,000			\$ 25,000
<i>PF Regional Staff (2)</i>	0.06	3	\$ 22,000			\$ 22,000
<i>PF Grants Staff (3)</i>	0.1	3	\$ 15,000			\$ 15,000
<i>Service Management Staff</i>	6	3		\$ 288,000	<i>Federal Government</i>	\$ 288,000
<i>Service Realty Staff</i>	3	3		\$ 144,000	<i>Federal Government</i>	\$ 144,000
						\$ -
						\$ -
Total	9.24		\$ 62,000	\$ 432,000	\$ -	\$ 494,000

Budget and Cash Leverage *(All your LSOHC Request Funds must be direct to and necessary for program outcomes.)*

Please describe how you intend to spend the requested funds.

Budget Item	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash		Total
		Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	
Personnel - auto entered from above	\$ 62,000	\$ 432,000	\$ -	\$ 494,000
Contracts	\$ 315,000			\$ 315,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT (breakout in table 7)				\$ -
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT (breakout in table 7)	\$ 4,910,000	\$ 2,600,000	<i>PF(75k)FWS(2.525M)</i>	\$ 7,510,000
Easement Acquisition				\$ -
Easement Stewardship				\$ -
Travel (in-state)				\$ -
Professional Services	\$ 113,000	\$ 288,000	<i>Federal Operation</i>	\$ 401,000
Direct Support Services				\$ -
DNR Land Acquisition Costs (\$3,500 per acquisition)				\$ -
Other				\$ -
Capital Equipment <i>(auto entered from below)</i>	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -
Other Equipment/Tools				\$ -
Supplies/Materials				\$ -
	\$ 5,400,000	\$ 3,320,000	\$ -	\$ 8,720,000

Capital Equipment *(single items over \$10,000 - auto entered into table above)*

Item Name	LSOHC Request	Leverage
Total	-	-

Attachment B. Output Tables

Name of Proposal:	Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program, Phase 4
Date:	24-Oct-11

Table 1 and Table 3 column totals should be the same AND Table 2 and Table 4 column totals should be the same

If your project has lakes or shoreline miles instead of land acres, convert miles to acres for Tables 1 and 3 using the following conversion:

Lakeshore = 6 acres per lakeshore mile / Stream & River Shore = 12 acres per linear mile, if both sides

Table 1. Acres by Resource Type

Describe the scope of the project in acres (use conversion above if needed)

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore					0
Protect Fee	235	700			935
Protect Easement					0
Protect Other					0
Enhance					0
Total	235	700	0	0	0

Total Acres (sum of Total column)
Total Acres (sum of Total row)

935
935 *These two cells should be the same figure.*

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore					\$ -
Protect Fee	\$ 1,512,000	\$ 3,888,000			\$ 5,400,000
Protect Easement					\$ -
Protect Other					\$ -
Enhance					\$ -
Total	\$ 1,512,000	\$ 3,888,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

Total Dollars (sum of Total column)
Total Dollars (sum of Total row)
Check to make sure this amount is the same as the Funding Request Amount on page 1 of Main Funding Form.

\$ 5,400,000
\$ 5,400,000 *These two cells should be the same figure.*

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore						0
Protect Fee	80	200		655		935
Protect Easement						0
Protect Other						0
Enhance						0
Total	80	200	0	655	0	0

Total Acres (sum of Total column)
Total Acres (sum of Total row)
Total Acres from Table 1.

935
935
935 *These three cells should be the same figure.*

Attachment B. Output Tables

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore						\$ -
Protect Fee	\$ 432,000	\$ 1,188,000		\$ 3,780,000		\$ 5,400,000
Protect Easement						\$ -
Protect Other						\$ -
Enhance						\$ -
Total	\$ 432,000	\$ 1,188,000	\$ -	\$ 3,780,000	\$ -	

Total Dollars (sum of Total column) \$ 5,400,000 *These two cells should be the same figure.*
 Total Dollars (sum of Total row) \$ 5,400,000
 Check to make sure these amounts are the same as the Funding Request Amount on page 1 of Main Funding Form.

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles

miles of Lakes / Streams / Rivers Shoreline

Table 6. Acquisition by PILT Status (enter information in acres)

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats	Total
Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Acquired in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	235	700	0	0	935
Permanent Easement PILT Liability <i>NO State</i>	0	0	0	0	0
	235	700	0	0	

Table 7. Estimated Value of Land Acquisition by PILT Status (enter information in dollars)

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats	Total	
Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability					\$ -	\$ -
Acquired in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$ 1,227,500	\$ 3,682,500			\$ 4,910,000	\$ 4,910,000
Permanent Easement PILT Liability <i>NO State</i>					\$ -	\$ -
	\$ 1,227,500	\$ 3,682,500	\$ -	\$ -		

FYI: should match total in budget table that is auto entered below

Attachment C. Parcel List

Name of Proposal: Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program,
Date: 24-Oct-11

County	Township (25-258)	Range (01-51)	Direction most parcels are 2 with the exception of some areas of Cook County which is 1	Section (01 thru 36)	TRDS	# of acres	Budgetary Estimate (includes administrative, restoration or other related costs and do not include matching money contributed or earned by the transaction)	Description	Activity PF=Protect Fee PE=Protect Easement PO=Protect Other R=Restore E=Enhance	If Easement, what is the easement cost as a % of the fee acquisition?	Any existing protection? (yes/no)	Open to hunting and fishing? (yes/no)
Parcel Name												
Sprouls WPA Addition	Stevens	T125N	R43W	2	17 & 20	125430217	50	\$262,500	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Pelican Lake WPA Addition	Wright	T120N	R25W	2	2	120250202	20	\$105,000	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Reynolds WPA Addition	Kandiyohi	T118N	R36W	2	22	118360222	18	\$94,500	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Stoney Creek WPA Addition	Stearns	T124N	R34W	2	2	124340202	40	\$210,000	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Trisko WPA Addition	Stearns	T125N	R34W	2	6	125340206	41	\$215,250	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Felber WPA Addition	Waseca	T107N	R22W	2	35	107220235	11	\$57,750	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Erin WPA Addition	Rice	T111N	R22W	2	15	111220215	80	\$420,000	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Evans Slough WPA Addition	Blue Earth	T106N	R29W	2	34	106290234	95	\$498,750	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Cobb WPA Addition	Blue Earth	T106N	R26W	2	14	106260214	30	\$157,500	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
TBA WPA	Clay	T138N	R46W	2	3	138460203	157	\$824,250	New WPA	PF, R	No	Yes
TBA WPA	Clay	T140N	R46W	2	34	140460234	160	\$840,000	New WPA	PF, R	No	Yes
TBA WPA	Clay	T139N	R46W	2	2	139460202	93	\$488,250	New WPA	PF, R	No	Yes
TBA WPA	Clay	T142N	R45W	2	29	142450229	160	\$840,000	New WPA	PF, R	No	Yes
Flickertail WPA Addition	Clay	T142N	R45W	2	34 & 35	142450234	301	\$1,580,250	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
TBA WPA	Clay	T137N	R44W	2	19	137440219	236	\$1,239,000	New WPA	PF, R	No	Yes
Spring Creek WPA Addition	Becker	T142N	R44W	2	13	142440213	10	\$52,500	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Donley/Tilman WPA Addition	Becker	T141N	R42W	2	12,13,18	141420213	322	\$1,690,500	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Goose Lk. WPA Addition	Freeborn	T102N	R21W	2	12	102210212	22	\$115,500	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes
Plover WPA Addiiton	Lac qui Parle			2			160	\$840,000	WPA Addition	PF, R	No	Yes

This list is dynamic and certain to change and be amended prior to July 1, 2012. Projects often fall off the list due to landowner interest and other priorities will certainly arise and be added. We would request the ability to transition viable, unfunded projects from previous WPA Acceleration grants.