

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2013 Final Report



Date: March 31, 2017

Program or Project Title: Northeastern Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Partnership, Phase IV

Funds Recommended: \$1,180,000

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Legislative Citation: ML 2013, Ch. 137, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(c)

Appropriation Language: \$1,180,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever in cooperation with the Minnesota Sharp-Tailed Grouse Society to acquire and enhance lands in Aitkin, Carlton, and Kanabec Counties for wildlife management purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

County Locations: Aitkin

Regions in which work was completed:

- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Habitat

Summary of Accomplishments:

The amended proposal was to accelerate the protection of 410 acres of primarily brushland in northeastern Minnesota for addition to the Wildlife Management Area system providing multiple environmental and wildlife benefits. Over the course of the appropriation, we acquired 1 parcel for a total of 396 acres which fell short of our total acre goal of 410 acres by 14 acres. The Gun Lake parcel is a hot spot for sharp-tail grouse and is considered by some as one of the top sharp-tail areas in east central MN.

All acquired acres are within the northern forest region. We have a balance of \$24,300 that will be returned to the Fund.

Process & Methods:

Working in close collaboration with partners, Pheasants Forever acquired 396 acres of strategic habitat that builds onto existing protected lands and/or develops corridors for wildlife. All land acquired has been enrolled into the state Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Program and will be protected and managed in perpetuity by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. We have worked together with federal, state and local partners when acquiring both parcels which will now be celebrated as new WMAs. These new WMAs not only provides access and recreational opportunities for all Minnesotans, but helps address a strong need to provide more secure nesting and brood rearing habitat for sharp-tailed grouse near existing leks.

The offer to the landowner was based on fair market values and appraisals. The acquired parcel helps address a backlog of willing sellers which is now helping slow the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of habitat in Minnesota. Parcels were identified jointly with the MN DNR, ranked, and prioritized on habitat goals and feasibility. Pheasants Forever's methods are formed around the principle of accelerating the Wildlife Production Area program in MN by targeting only the best available habitat with willing sellers. We utilize local partner expertise to focus on building a system of interconnected wildlife complexes that create habitat mosaics. We also utilize the latest geospatial layers to help determine factors such as: habitat restoration potential, landscape scale significance, presence of rare features and native habitat, and how these acquisitions fit into other priorities for our partners.

This proposal was amended to reduce our acre goal which was proposed in the June 2013 Council meeting and approved by the council. We came to the council in June to reduce the obligated acres from the original proposal because of the importance of this parcel and the fact that it costs more per acre than anticipated. The council approved these changes because of this parcel's wildlife value which includes multiple sharp-tail leks, water mitigation credits, a DNR history of grouse viewing blinds. Gun Lake WMA is a complex of 762 acres of contiguous habitat.

All parcels acquired have been or will be restored and/or enhanced to as a high quality as practicable. All agricultural row crops on these parcels have been or will be restored to native grassland/wetland complexes. The grasslands were restored using a broadcast or drill seeded method with a diverse mix of native grasses and forb species. Wetlands were restored using a combination of tile breaking, sediment removal, dike construction, and water control structures. Scattered invasive tree removal and prescribed fire were used where appropriate to enhance existing grassland habitat after protection.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition:

We worked in close collaboration with MN DNR to find and evaluate the best properties to peruse based on the criteria listed in the process and methods section. During the process, we also worked with many other partners to gauge interest levels and determine if the property is suitable for a Wildlife Management Area.

Additional Comments:

Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

There were no exceptional failures or challenges that were encountered. This is due in part to our high level of collaboration and efficiency. We also strive to be respectful and accommodating in helping to facilitate landowners wishes when working with willing sellers as many see this as leaving their own habitat legacy.

Other Funds Received:

- Not Listed

How were the funds used to advanced the program:

Not Listed

What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended:

All parcels acquired have been transferred to the MN DNR for enrollment into the Wildlife Management Area program. All parcels were acquired then restored as part of this effort. The long-term management & maintenance of these new WMAs will be the responsibility of the MN DNR. Pheasants Forever is also active in additional habitat enhancement and restoration activities on existing public lands where there is a need.

Outcomes:

The original accomplishment plan stated the program would

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation
- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species
- Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors
- Landlocked public properties have increased access for land managers
- Brushlands (of special concern in the Council's vision).

How will the outcomes be measured and evaluated?

We permanently protected 396 acres of grassland, brushland, and wetland complexes resulting in secure nesting and brood rearing habitat for sharp-tailed grouse. These new WMAs improve access to public habitat, build on existing protected lands, and create an essential mosaic of habitat complexes. Building on complexes of existing permanently protected lands help put the pieces back together reducing fragmentation and creating large undisturbed habitat expanses needed by sharp-tail grouse. These short term outcomes contribute to our long term goals of creating stable and/or increasing game and non-game wildlife populations while increasing opportunities for wildlife dependent recreation by the public.

Budget Spreadsheet

Final Budget line item reallocations are allowed up to 10% and do not need require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan

Total Amount: \$1,180,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	Request	Spent	Cash Leverage (anticipated)	Cash Leverage (received)	Leverage Source	Total (original)	Total (final)
Personnel	\$12,000	\$8,600	\$0	\$0		\$12,000	\$8,600
Contracts	\$39,000	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$39,000	\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,055,000	\$1,146,800	\$14,000	\$205,100	Private Source	\$1,069,000	\$1,351,900
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Professional Services	\$25,000	\$300	\$0	\$100	PF	\$25,000	\$400
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$15,000	\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
DNR IDP	\$34,000	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$34,000	\$0
Total	\$1,180,000	\$1,155,700	\$14,000	\$205,200		\$1,194,000	\$1,360,900

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	Spent	Cash Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF Director of Conservation	0.01	3.00	\$6,500	\$0		\$6,500
PF National Grants Staff	0.01	3.00	\$2,100	\$0		\$2,100
Total	0.02	6.00	\$8,600	\$0		\$8,600

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

* Amendment on October 23rd, 2014 changed proposed budgets for contracts from \$39,000 to \$0.00, Fee Acquisition w/PILT from \$1,055,000 to \$1,153,000, Professional Services from \$25,000 to \$10,000, DNR Land Acquisition Costs from \$15,000 to \$5,000, and DNR IDP from \$34,000 to \$0.00. We came in under budget for personal costs and professional services. We will be returning a total of \$24,300 back to the Outdoor Heritage Council.

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands (original)	Wetlands (final)	Prairies (original)	Prairies (final)	Forest (original)	Forest (final)	Habitats (original)	Habitats (final)	Total (original)	Total (final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	969	396	969	396
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	969	396	969	396

Table 2. Total Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands (original)	Wetlands (final)	Prairies (original)	Prairies (final)	Forest (original)	Forest (final)	Habitats (original)	Habitats (final)	Total (original)	Total (final)
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,180,000	\$1,155,700	\$1,180,000	\$1,155,700
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,180,000	\$1,155,700	\$1,180,000	\$1,155,700

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban (original)	Metro Urban (final)	ForestPrairie (original)	Forest Prairie (final)	SEForest (original)	SEForest (final)	Prairie (original)	Prairie (final)	N Forest (original)	N Forest (final)	Total (original)	Total (final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	969	396	969	396
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	969	396	969	396

Table 4. Total Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban (original)	Metro Urban (final)	ForestPrairie (original)	Forest Prairie (final)	SEForest (original)	SEForest (final)	Prairie (original)	Prairie (final)	N Forest (original)	N Forest (final)	Total (original)	Total (final)
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,180,000	\$1,155,700	\$1,180,000	\$1,155,700
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,180,000	\$1,155,700	\$1,180,000	\$1,155,700

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles (original)

0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles (final)

0

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals:

* Acre goal was amended on October 23rd, 2013 to 410 acres* We acquired 1 parcel for a total of 396 acres which fell short of our total acre goal of 410 acres by 14 acres. All acquired acres are within the northern forest region.

Parcel List

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Aitkin

Name	TRDS	Acres	OHF Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?	Description
Gun Lake WMA Addition	04822206	396	\$1,134,450	No	Full	Not Applicable	

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Completed Parcel: Gun Lake WMA Addition

# of Total Acres:	396
County:	Aitkin
Township:	048
Range:	22
Direction:	2
Section:	06
# of Acres: Wetlands/Upland:	82.76
# of Acres: Forest:	
# of Acres: Prairie/Grassland:	
Amount of Shoreline:	
Name of Adjacent Body of Water (if applicable):	
Has there been signage erected at the site:	Yes
Annual Reporting Organization Name:	MN DNR
Annual Reporting Manager Name:	Kim Hennings
Annual Reporting Address:	500 Lafayette Road
Annual Reporting City:	St. Paul
Annual Reporting State:	MN
Annual Reporting Zip:	55155
Annual Reporting Email:	kim.hennings@state.mn.us
Annual Reporting Phone:	6512595220
Purchase Date:	November 07, 2013
Acquisition Title:	
Purchase Price:	\$1,134,450
Appraised Value:	\$1,339,500
Professional Service Costs:	\$9,480
Assessed Value:	\$415,230
Total Project Cost:	\$1,238,671
Fees Received:	\$0
Donations:	\$152,000
Related Parties:	
Property Managed By:	DNR - Wildlife Management Area -
Name of the unit area or location government unit or land manager:	Russell Reisz

Parcel Map

Northeastern Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Partnership, Phase IV

