

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Laws of Minnesota 2013 Accomplishment Plan

Date: October 18, 2012

Program or Project Title: Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program, Phase 5

Funds Recommended: \$7,960,000

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Legislative Citation: (to be completed when signed by Governor)

County Locations: Brown, Carver, Cottonwood, Jackson, LeSueur, Lincoln, Martin, McLeod, Mower, Murray, Pipestone, Renville, Stearns, and Stevens.

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban

Activity Type:

- Restore
- Protect in Fee

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

Abstract:

This proposal accelerates the protection of 1,220 acres of prairie grassland, wetland, and other wildlife habitat as State Wildlife Management Areas open to public hunting.

Activity Detail

Design and Scope of Work:

The pressures from development, industry, and agriculture continue to mount on wildlife habitat within the farmland regions of Minnesota. In fact, despite our collective investments in conservation, it is believed that many of the agricultural counties in Minnesota are continuing to experience a net loss of wildlife habitat. This unfortunate reality is currently being exacerbated by conversion of lands expiring out of CRP. Now, more than ever, is the time to accelerate our investments in permanently protected high quality public habitat complexes that will protect, maintain, and increase Minnesota's wildlife populations. In addition, being able to provide public areas for Minnesotans to hunt, trap, fish and otherwise recreate in the outdoors are urgent needs and is fundamental to ensure Minnesota's outdoor heritage and appreciation of the outdoors is passed on to future generations.

To help slow and reverse the loss of habitat and declining wildlife populations, Pheasants Forever (PF) and our partners will protect (fee acquisition from willing sellers) 1,220 acres of high priority grassland (native prairie if available), wetland, and wildlife habitat as state Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) throughout the pheasant range of Minnesota. Striving to build landscape level habitat complexes that will protect and sustain wildlife populations, many of the potential projects are additions to existing WMAs or WPAs, many of which were originally acquired in partnership with MNDNR, local PF chapters, and conservation partners.

Projects were developed and selected in conjunction with local and regional DNR staff. All projects will meet standards and requirements for inclusion into the WMA system and DNR Commissioner approval will be received for any project funded under this proposal. In addition to meeting the minimum WMA standards, additional criteria were used to develop the potential project list including:

Does the parcel contain habitat restoration potential that will result in an increase in wildlife populations?

Does the parcel build upon existing investments in public and private land habitat (landscape scale significance)?

Does the parcel contain significant natural communities or will it protect or buffer significant natural communities?

Does the parcel have the potential and focus for habitat protection and restoration in the future?

Does the parcel provide multiple benefits (recreation, access, water control, water quality, lakeshore, local community support etc.)?

All acquired lands will meet the minimum initial development standards for WMAs. In addition, providing high quality habitat and keeping future management concerns in mind, all acquisitions will be restored and/or enhanced to as high quality as practicable, with the belief that quality and comprehensive restorations utilizing native species result in lower management costs. Acquired croplands will be

permanently retired and restored to diverse grasslands and wetlands to the fullest extent. Enhancement work may include undesirable woody vegetation removal, water control structure installation, inter-seeding to increase diversity and structure, managed grazing, invasive species control, or any other activity that improves the diversity and health of the prairie-wetland habitat complex.

Pheasants Forever's network of 76 Minnesota chapters and 26,000 members have been actively involved in protecting and restoring lands in partnership with the Minnesota DNR for 27 years and will continue to be a priority. WMA's are an integral component to the comprehensive conservation strategy within the prairie region of the state. The WMAs within this proposal will not only protect, increase, and sustain wildlife habitat and populations; they will provide access and recreational opportunities, including hunting, to ALL Minnesotans, so fundamentally important to our outdoor heritage.

Planning

MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H4 Restore and protect shallow lakes
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

Plans Addressed:

- A Vision for Wildlife and Its Use -- Goals and Outcomes 2006-2012
- Grassland Bird Conservation Area
- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN
- Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Plans
- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Minnesota Sustainability Framework
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years
- National Audubon Society Top 20 Common Birds in Decline
- North American Waterbird Conservation Plan
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework
- Partners in Flight Conservation Plans for States and Physiographic Regions
- Partners in Flight Grassland Bird Plan
- State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare
- U.S. Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Plan

LSOHC Statewide Priorities:

- Are ongoing, successful, transparent and accountable programs addressing actions and targets of one or more of the ecological sections
- Produce multiple enduring conservation benefits
- Are able to leverage effort and/or other funds to supplement any OHF appropriation
- Allow public access. This comes into play when all other things about the request are approximately equal
- Address conservation opportunities that will be lost if not immediately acted on
- Restore or enhance habitat on state-owned WMAs, AMAs, SNAs, and state forests
- Use a science-based strategic planning and evaluation model to guide protection, restoration and enhancement, similar to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model
- Address wildlife species of greatest conservation need, Minnesota County Biological Survey data, and rare, threatened and endangered species inventories in land and water decisions, as well as permanent solutions to aquatic invasive species
- Provide Minnesotans with greater public access to outdoor environments with hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation opportunities
- Ensures activities for "protecting, restoring and enhancing" are coordinated among agencies, non profits and others while doing this important work
- Target unique Minnesota landscapes that have historical value to fish and wildlife

LSOHC Prairie Section Priorities:

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes
- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna
- Convert agricultural land to wetland/upland to protect, enhance, or restore existing habitat complexes, such as WMAs
- Restore or enhance habitat on public lands
- Protect expiring CRP lands
- Protect, enhance, and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

LSOHC Forest Prairie Transition Section Priorities:

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife
- Protect, enhance, and restore rare native remnant prairie
- Protect, enhance, and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

LSOHC Metro Urban Section Priorities:

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- No Relationships Listed

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

Land acquisition and restoration have not kept pace with habitat restoration needs or the backlog of willing sellers within the pheasant range. Opportunity is not the limiting factor in implementing the pheasant plan. Available funding is the limiting factor. With over 500,000 acres of CRP expiring in the near future, our conservation efforts must be accelerated. Before the passage of the OHF, PF would help acquire approximately 1,000 acres of land yearly that had been donated to a public agency. This grant significantly accelerates our ability to acquire priority parcels and more than doubles our historic yearly accomplishments. 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 lands will be enrolled into the state Wildlife Management Area system and will be managed in perpetuity by the Minnesota DNR. All acquired lands will meet the minimum initial development standards for WMAs. In addition, providing high quality habitat and keeping future management concerns in mind, all acquisitions will be restored and/or enhanced to as high quality as practicable, with the belief that quality and comprehensive restorations utilizing native species result in lower management costs. In addition, our local Pheasants Forever chapter members and volunteers maintain a high interest in seeing the habitat and productivity of acquired parcels are at high-quality levels. PF and partners including the DNR and USFWS will develop an ecological restoration and management plan for each parcel. Grant and partner dollars will be used to for the initial site development and restoration/enhancement work.

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition? - **No**

Current DNR language requires acquisition partners to notify local government of acquisition. However, where local government approval is already required, or if DNR guidance was to change, we will adhere to all requirements and seek approval.

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection? - **No**

Because we are working within priority habitat areas, it is possible that parcels could have perpetual easements on a portion of them. If a parcel has a perpetual easement and is deemed a high priority by the partners, we will follow guidance

established by the Outdoor Heritage Fund to proceed, or use non-state funding to acquire the protected portion of the property.

Is this land open for hunting and fishing? - **Yes**

No Variation from State of Minnesota regulations.

Is the activity on permanently protected land and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15? - **Yes (WMA)**

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Identify priority acquisitions	07/01/2013
Contract appraisals ordered	09/01/2013
Purchase agreements	02/01/2014
Re-evaluate tract priority	02/15/2014
Contract appraisals ordered	04/01/2014
Purchase agreements	07/01/2014
Close on tracts	01/01/2015
Restoration completed	06/30/2015
Lands Donated	06/30/2015

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors
- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need
- Wetland and upland complexes will consist of native prairies, restored prairies, quality grasslands, and restored shallow lakes and wetlands
- Water is kept on the land
- Improved access to public lands

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need
- Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting
- Improved access to public lands

Programs in prairie region:

- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna
- Expiring CRP lands are permanently protected
- Improved condition of habitat on public lands
- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need
- Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands
- Remnant native prairies and wetlands are permanently protected and are part of large complexes of restored prairie, grasslands, and large and small wetlands
- Water is kept on the land
- Improved access to public lands

Budget Spreadsheet

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan

Total Amount of Request: \$7,960,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$48,000	\$0		\$48,000
Contracts	\$477,000	\$106,000	PF, Private, Federal	\$583,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$7,315,000	\$292,000	PF, Private, Federal	\$7,607,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel (in-state)	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$7,960,000	\$398,000		- \$8,358,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	Total
PF Director of Conservation	0.04	3.00	\$16,000	\$0		\$16,000
PF Regional Staff	0.04	3.00	\$16,000	\$0		\$16,000
PF National Grants Staff	0.10	3.00	\$16,000	\$0		\$16,000
Total	0.18	9.00	\$48,000	\$0	-	\$48,000

Output Tables

Table 1. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	305	915	0	0	1,220
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	305	915	0	0	1,220

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$1,990,000	\$5,970,000	\$0	\$0	\$7,960,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$1,990,000	\$5,970,000	\$0	\$0	\$7,960,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	54	106	0	1,060	0	1,220
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	54	106	0	1,060	0	1,220

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$477,000	\$636,000	\$0	\$6,847,000	\$0	\$7,960,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$477,000	\$636,000	\$0	\$6,847,000	\$0	\$7,960,000

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles

0 miles

Parcel List

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Brown

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Coal Mine Creek WMA	109350207	142	\$860,000		Full	Not Applicable

Carver

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Paterson Lake WMA	116250220	320	\$3,200,000		Full	Not Applicable

Cottonwood

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Farhagen WMA	105360211	105	\$700,000		Full	Not Applicable

Jackson

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Minneota WMA Tr. 2	101360231	80	\$500,000		Full	Not Applicable
Teal Lake WMA Tr. 2	104360230	185	\$1,400,000		Full	Not Applicable
Vaca WMA	102360205	80	\$400,000		Full	Not Applicable

LeSueur

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Sanborn Lake WMA	112230226	214	\$1,300,000		Full	Full

Lincoln

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
MinnKota WMA Tr. 5	113460206	221	\$750,000		Full	Not Applicable

Martin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Center Creek WMA	103290221	235	\$950,000		Full	Not Applicable

McLeod

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Rich Valley Tr. 2	116280219	114	\$680,000		Full	Not Applicable

Mower

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Ramsey Mill Pond WMA Tr. 2	103180213	167	\$1,150,000		Full	Not Applicable

Murray

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Shetek Inlet	108410211	100	\$550,000		Full	Full

Pipestone

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Woodstock WMA Tr. 2	107440202	136	\$650,000		Full	Not Applicable

Renville

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Beaver Falls	113350225	80	\$368,000		Full	Not Applicable

Stearns

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Middlefork Meadows	123340231	229	\$1,053,400		Full	Not Applicable
Prairie Heritage T2	123340236	160	\$736,000		Full	Not Applicable

Stevens

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Dolven WMA Tr.2	125410219	29	\$140,000		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.