

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

Date: October 19, 2012

Program or Project Title: Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex Phase III

Funds Recommended: \$1,780,000

Manager's Name: Becca Nash

Title:

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

County Locations: Le Sueur, and Rice.

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Prairie

Activity Type:

- Restore
- Protect in Fee

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Wetlands
- Forest
- Prairie
- Habitat

Abstract:

Protect approximately 350 acres and restore approximately 67 acres near the Cannon River headwaters, including wetlands, prairies, Big Woods forest, and river & shallow lake shoreline to reverse habitat loss, improve watershed function, and provide access.

Activity Detail

Design and Scope of Work:

The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex Phase III effort will address the following problems: degradation and loss of quality and diversity of habitat in the prairie section of the State; degradation of water quality in the Cannon River Watershed; and lack of available public lands for hunting and angling opportunities, especially within an hour's drive for over half of the state's population.

Located just south of the Twin Cities metro in an area that has seen development pressure due to the close proximity of the Twin Cities, I-35 and the Upper Cannon Lakes, much of this part of the state has already suffered fragmentation and habitat loss. Historically inhabited by Big Woods, the landscape is now dominated by agricultural fields and, to a lesser extent, development. Agricultural practices and shoreline development are also the major contributors to the impaired status of stretches of the Cannon River and its associated lakes and streams.

This conservation effort is part of a multi-year effort that includes acquisition, protection, and restoration of core parcels of land that will contribute to a large complex of restored prairies, grasslands, wetlands, lakeshore, and river shoreline.

The initial acquisitions are prioritized toward existing large wetland/upland complexes, rare communities (Big Woods forest, oak savanna, tamarack swamp), shallow lakes, river shoreline, and lands adjacent to existing protected areas. Landowner willingness to sell and the threat of conversion are also taken into consideration. Restoration work (approximately 67 acres) will be focused on the degraded portions of the lands acquired and will include restoration of agricultural fields near wetlands, lakes, rivers and existing protected areas to native habitat.

Protection and restoration of these significant parcels will provide critical habitat for game species, including migratory waterfowl (mallards, canvasback, wood ducks, hooded mergansers, pintails, lesser scaup), upland birds (dove, turkey, pheasant, and woodcock) white tail deer, and fish (northern pike, black crappies, bluegills, bullheads and walleye). Protection will also provide access for a diversity of recreational experiences including duck, pheasant, turkey and deer hunting as well as river, stream, and lake fishing. Non-game wildlife, including Species in Greatest Conservation Need, likely to benefit from this protection and restoration work includes Bald Eagle, Bell's Vireo, Cerulean Warbler, Loggerhead Shrike, Sandhill Crane, Red-headed Woodpecker, Greater Yellowlegs, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Blanding's Turtle, Mudpuppies, and the Giant Floater, a species of freshwater mussel.

Protecting and restoring vegetative cover within basins and the riparian areas of the lakes, rivers, and streams in this focus area will also help protect water quality by reducing surface water runoff and by providing ecological services such as infiltration through natural buffers to our waterways. All wildlife—and humans—will benefit from improved water quality.

The DNR's Southern Region Conservation Focus Area assessment tool ranked the Cannon River area as having the highest level of inter-divisional conservation

priority when examined at the landscape level.

Work will be completed in phases depending on funding availability and landowner willingness to sell. Properties targeted for acquisition and restoration as part of this Phase III request to LSOHC (FY14) include the following:

Dora Lake WMA (existing)- tracts 2 & 5 (Le Sueur County)

These lands build on the new 510-acre Dora Lake WMA property that was created with FY 12 Outdoor Heritage Funds. This large upland-wetland complex with a mosaic of native plant types is near the Velishek, Diamond Lake, and the proposed LeTamarague WMAs and the Delehanty Waterfowl Production Area (WPA). It contains Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS)- identified native habitat including a portion of remnant Big Woods, some southern-most occurrence of tamarack swamp in the state, and over 2 miles of naturally flowing Cannon River, directly upstream from a concentration of rare freshwater mussels. These new tract would add another ¼ mile of Cannon River and an island of tamaracks to the WMA.

Boyd Sartell WMA (existing)- tracts 3 & 5 (Rice County)

These two tracts contain diverse marsh habitats and about 100 acres of uplands consisting of oak islands and grassy knolls, Big Woods and tamarack forests, and over 1/4 mile of the headwaters of the Cannon River. Acquisition will conserve a high quality emergent marsh complex (as characterized by MCBS) associated with General Shields Lake and Little Mud Lake. The acquisition will protect seasonally flooded wetlands and other key habitats for waterfowl and wetland wildlife ranging from sedge wrens and ring-necked ducks to sandhill cranes and trumpeter swans. The area also provides habitat for rare animals and species of conservation need, including colonial waterbirds and Blanding's turtles. The tract would expand the Boyd Sartell and protect a part of a large, relatively unfragmented habitat area and corridor - a rare entity in south-central Minnesota.

Koester Prairie WMA (new)- tract 1 (Rice County)

This parcel contains approximately 200 acres of rolling grassland, prairie, and oak savanna that are associated with Prairie Creek and its tributaries and that directly buffer approximately 130 acres of rare and highly significant native prairie that is currently protected with a native prairie bank easement. 41 native upland prairie species have been documented here as well as a number of sedge meadow and wet prairie species. The dry oak savanna found on the property is also extremely rare, with only 13 occurrences of this type documented in the state. The site is known to locals as being the biggest and best birding area in the county. Bird Species in Greatest Conservation Need utilizing this site include: Swainson's Hawk, Upland Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Bobolink. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is providing \$10k matching funds for restoration of this property through their Partners in Fish and Wildlife program.

The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex effort is supported by the **Cannon River Watershed Partnership**, the **Dark House Anglers Southern Chapter**, the **Izaak Walton League Owatonna Chapter**, **Minnesota Deer Hunters Association South Central Prairieland Bucks Chapter (Le Sueur, Rice,**

Waseca, and Steele Counties), Minnesota State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Minnesota Waterfowl Association Scott- Le Sueur Chapter, Montgomery Sportsmen's Club, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Pheasants Forever- Le Sueur County Chapter, the Tri-Lake Sports Club, Waterville Sportsman's Club, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service

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
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

Plans Addressed:

- Grassland Bird Conservation Area
- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN
- Long Range Plan for the Wild Turkey
- Minnesota DNR AMA Acquisition Plan
- Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Plans
- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years
- National Audubon Society Top 20 Common Birds in Decline
- 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
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Strategic Habitat Conservation Model
- 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, restore, and enhance shallow lakes
- Protect expiring CRP lands
- Protect, enhance, and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund
- Clean Water Fund

This effort is seeking the significant portion of funding for acquisition and restoration work from the Outdoor Heritage Fund. Past matching funds have been provided from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as part of the Statewide Habitat Corridors Partnership. The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex partners will continue to try to seek additional restoration funds from the Clean Water Fund.

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

L-SOHC funding would provide capital for the land acquisition and funding for the restoration work included in this proposal. These costs are not included in TPL's organizational budget. Additionally, TPL staff time, legal costs, and costs for appraisals, title & environmental investigation, and survey work is not included in this request. Acquisition-associated costs incurred by the DNR as part of accepting

ownership of these lands are included in the request. The L-SOHC funding will not substitute for any traditional funding sources.

Sustainability and Maintenance:

Once the Cannon Rivers Headwaters Habitat Complex lands have been acquired and conveyed to the DNR to be managed as a WMA and/or AMA, initial site development and restoration of these lands will begin. Estimated costs for DNR's initial site development and restoration work are included in this proposal. TPL will work with DNR to complete a restoration plan and implementation of that plan will be completed in the following years. The property will be managed for the long term as a WMA and/or AMA and will be maintained by the Minnesota DNR according to their WMA and AMA guidelines.

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

Notification will be made unless otherwise required.

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection? - **Yes**

Is this land open for hunting and fishing? - **Yes**
Hunting and Fishing Regulations Not Listed

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

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Landowner negotiations, agreements, due diligence, acquisition	July 15, 2014
Initial Site Development, Restoration	

Outcomes

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

- 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

Budget Spreadsheet

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

Total Amount of Request: \$1,780,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,736,300	\$0		\$1,736,300
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	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$7,000	\$0		\$7,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$36,700	\$0		\$36,700
Total	\$1,780,000	\$0	-	\$1,780,000

Output Tables

Table 1. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	12	28	27	0	67
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	120	92	67	71	350
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	132	120	94	71	417

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$6,500	\$15,200	\$15,000	\$0	\$36,700
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$595,000	\$458,300	\$334,000	\$356,000	\$1,743,300
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	\$601,500	\$473,500	\$349,000	\$356,000	\$1,780,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	67	0	67
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	350	0	350
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	0	0	0	417	0	417

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$36,700	\$0	\$36,700
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,743,300	\$0	\$1,743,300
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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,780,000	\$0	\$1,780,000

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles

1 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

Le Sueur

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Dora Lake WMA (tract 2)	11023W11	53	\$23,360	Y
Dora Lake WMA (tract 5)	11023W10	12	\$17,100	Y

Rice

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Boyd Sartell WMA (tract 3)	11022W10	5	\$2,500	Y
Boyd Sartell WMA (tract 5)	11022W02	50	\$15,000	y
Koester Prairie WMA		40	\$26,000	Yes
Weinberger Lake		5	\$1,500	Y

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Le Sueur

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Dora Lake WMA (tract 2)	11023W11	80	\$330,000	N	Y	Y
Dora Lake WMA (tract 5)	11023W10	125	\$361,000	N	Y	Y

Rice

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Boyd Sartell WMA (tract 3)	11022W10	75	\$255,000	N	Y	Y
Boyd Sartell WMA (tract 5)	11022W02	144	\$864,000	N	Y	Y
Koester Prairie WMA (tract 1)	11119W26	200	\$1,200,000	N	Y	Y
Weinberger Lake	10922W01	31	\$248,000	N	Y	Y

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.