

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

Date: October 22, 2012

Program or Project Title: Protect (Acquire) Key Forest Habitat Lands Cass County

Funds Recommended: \$500,000

Manager's Name: Joshua Stevenson

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

County Locations: Cass,

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Northern Forest

Activity Type:

- Protect in Fee

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Forest

Abstract:

Project will protect forest wildlife habitat in central Minnesota through fee title acquisition of key forest tracts. Title of lands acquired will be held by Cass County in Fee.

Activity Detail

Design and Scope of Work:

Problem: Central Minnesota, especially the area in Cass County from Brainerd/Baxter to Walker, has and will continue to see some of the fastest human population growth

in Minnesota. This growth will lead to increased demands/use of this area, its natural resources and related public land base that needs to support this growth. Development of these parcels has resulted in the loss of Jack Pine barrens and forested lakeshore in the landscape of southern Cass County. Forest tracts currently undeveloped, held by private property owners, are currently being sold to private developers. These lands often provide access to existing public lands for resource management, are in holdings in otherwise unfragmented landscapes, create contiguous wildlife corridors, and protect larger blocks of land especially useful for stand level management of habitat.

Opportunity: Key forest tracts (i.e. in-holdings in large public land tracts, management access issues, etc.) are being considered or currently being offered for sale by private property owners in this area. Depressed market conditions and a willingness by current owners to sell at this time is an opportunity that should be addressed now since it is narrow and may close (properties sold) at any time. The strategy is to acquire lands that hold together unfragmented landscapes, avoid incompatible in holding development or creates habitat corridors. The land acquired has existing forest access roads that have been used for management access for years. The sale of these lands to private individuals has already resulted in the loss of access for resource management on public lands. The acquired lands are not being pursued for convenience of management.

The identified parcels play a key role in future management plans of the Jack Pine Barrens and Forest Lakeshore including the role of fire as a management tool. The loss of these parcels to private ownership will result in lost access. Management of adjacent public lands will be limited to frozen ground conditions. This will eliminate management tools such as site preparation for Jack Pine plantings and aerial seeding as well as prescribed burns for Jack Pine regeneration. This type of management requires year round access. The acquired lands provide year round management access to existing public lands in the Jack Pine barrens landscape. The acquisition of these lands will provide permanent year round access for forest management as well as protecting habitat in and around the surrounding areas.

The Cass County Forest Resource Management Plan directs the County to acquire lands of this nature whenever possible to protect our management access. The Cass County Comprehensive plan requires no net loss of acres of public land and local unit of government input on all purchases and land sales. This project meets the requirements of both plans and will require stakeholder input as part of the project. The local units of government with the lands to be purchased will be contacted for input before any acquisitions are made. Recent purchases of this nature have been supported by both the County and local units of government. The Cass County Board of Commissioners has a strong history of supporting land sales and acquisitions that have local unit of government support.

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
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land
- LU10 Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands

Plans Addressed:

- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- Cass County Forest Resource Management 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
- 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 Northern Forest Section Priorities:

- Protect shoreland and restore or enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, cold water lakes, streams and rivers, and spawning areas
- Protect forestland through acquisition or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties
- Restore and enhance habitat on existing protected properties, with preference to habitat for rare, endangered, or threatened species identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund

The Cass County Land Department has used funds from the LCCMR for this type of activity in the past. Property acquisitions using LCCMR were very successful. With new changes to the use of that fund, it seems that our proposal is most likely to be funded from the LSOHC.

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

The total value of this project is almost 25% of our annual budget. The entire amount received will be used for acquisition. The amount of money available to the Cass County Land Department for acquisition in the past is directly related to land sale revenue. Land Sales revenue has been down recently and funds to LCCMR are still outstanding pending the sale of land currently available over the counter. Our current staff will use this money to acquire lands in fee following existing procedures. Because our activity in land purchases and sales is currently low due to the depressed land sale market, there will be little or no effect on current duties.

Sustainability and Maintenance:

The Cass County Land Department manages all County Administered lands under our Forest Resource Management Plan. This management plan requires that operations are maintained from revenue generated from timber sales. Cass County has a long history of covering our operation costs with timber revenue. The lands acquired will be managed under this same plan. These lands are not eligible for PILT payments. MN Statute 477A.11 defines lands that are eligible as being held by the state in fee or tax forfeited. The acquired lands for this project will be held in fee by Cass County and therefore are not eligible for PILT Payments. There will be no ongoing cost to the State of MN for the acquisition of these lands.

*Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition? - **Yes***

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

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

All Cass County Administered Land is open to public hunting and fishing.

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Meet with LUGs and prepare purchase agreements	2/1/2014
Contract for appraisals and acquirelands in fee	6/1/2014
Record Deeds	8/1/2014

Outcomes

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

Budget Spreadsheet

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

Total Amount of Request: \$500,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$0	\$37,000		\$37,000
Contracts	\$0	\$8,000		\$8,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$500,000	\$0		\$500,000
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	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$500,000	\$45,000	-	\$545,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	Total
Resource Manager	0.25	0.00	\$0	\$18,500		\$18,500
Land	0.25	0.00	\$0	\$18,500		\$18,500
Total	0.50	0.00	\$0	\$37,000	-	\$37,000

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	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	427	0	427
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	427	0	427

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	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$0	\$500,000
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	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$0	\$500,000

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	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	427	427
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	427	427

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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$500,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$500,000

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

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Cass

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Bull Moose	13831204	84	\$122,500	No	Full	Full
Byron Parcel WMA	13532207	25	\$18,400	No	Full	Full
Byron Parcel WMA	13532218	177	\$171,800	No	Full	Full
Hiram 80 Parcel	14031235	81	\$159,200	No	Full	Full
Homebrook Parcel	13530216	81	\$124,100	No	Full	Full
Lima Parcel	14125207	20	\$28,300	No	Full	Full
Pike Bay Parcel	14531232	40	\$28,700	No	Full	Full

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.