

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

Date: October 18, 2012

Program or Project Title: Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program, Phase 5

Funds Recommended: \$6,830,000

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

County Locations: Big Stone, Blue Earth, Clay, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Lac Qui Parle, Lyon, Mahnomen, Murray, Rice, Stearns, and Wright.

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 permanent protection of 1,230 acres of wetlands (492 acres) and grasslands (738 acres) as Waterfowl Production Areas open to public hunting in Minnesota.

Activity Detail

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 492 acres of wetland and 738 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

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:

- Grassland Bird Conservation Area
- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN
- Managing Minnesota's Shallow Lakes for Waterfowl and Wildlife
- Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Plans
- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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
- Protect, enhance, and restore riparian and littoral habitats on lakes to benefit game and nongame fish species

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- No Relationships Listed

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

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 Refuge 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 in Minnesota. 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.

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.

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.

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

Unless otherwise informed, we will notify local government in writing of the intent to acquire and donate lands to the Service and follow up with questions prior to acquisition.

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

Some of the parcels may have a federal or state easement which provides permanent protection for wetlands or grasslands. If a parcel has one of these encumbrances, and is still 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 residual value of the protected portion of the property.

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

All acquired lands will be open to the public taking of fish and game during the open season according to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, United States Code, title 16, section 668dd, et seq.

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

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

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
- 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: \$6,830,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$48,000	\$409,000		\$457,000
Contracts	\$573,000	\$0		\$573,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$6,072,400	\$2,732,000		\$8,804,400
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel (in-state)	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$136,600	\$274,000		\$410,600
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	\$6,830,000	\$3,415,000	-	\$10,245,000

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	0.05	3.00	\$16,000	\$0		\$16,000
PF National Grants Staff	0.10	3.00	\$16,000	\$0		\$16,000
USFWS Realty Staff	0.00	3.00	\$0	\$136,000	Federal Government	\$136,000
USFWS Management Staff	0.00	3.00	\$0	\$273,000	Federal Government	\$273,000
Total	0.19	15.00	\$48,000	\$409,000	-	\$457,000

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	492	738	0	0	1,230
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	492	738	0	0	1,230

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	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$2,732,000	\$4,098,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,830,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$2,732,000	\$4,098,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,830,000

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	55	355	0	820	0	1,230
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	55	355	0	820	0	1,230

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	\$444,000	\$1,946,000	\$0	\$4,440,000	\$0	\$6,830,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$444,000	\$1,946,000	\$0	\$4,440,000	\$0	\$6,830,000

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

Big Stone

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Beck WPA Addition	12447235	160	\$410,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Blue Earth

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Howard Family Farm WPA Addition	10728210	178	\$1,250,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Clay

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
TBA WPA	14245229	160	\$840,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
TBA WPA	13744219	236	\$1,239,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Jackson

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Christiana WPA Addition T2	10435209	25	\$197,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Little Sioux WPA Addition	10136219	151	\$1,100,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Kandiyohi

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Freese Lake WPA Addition	12236214	71	\$355,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Lac qui Parle

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Plover WPA Addiiton	12045211	160	\$800,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Lac Qui Parle

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
New WPA	12146232	205	\$1,025,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Lyon

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Arends WPA Addition	11343218	39	\$120,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
TBA WPA	11042233	226	\$1,150,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Mahnomon

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Squirrel Lake WPA Addition	14341233	80	\$240,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Murray

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
New WPA	10843204	153	\$840,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Rice

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Erin WPA Addition	11122215	80	\$600,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Stearns

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Whitney WPA Additon	12635211	60	\$300,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Wright

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Pelican Lk. WPA Addition	12024205	19	\$114,000	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.