

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Laws of Minnesota 2014 Accomplishment Plan

**Date:** December 17, 2013

**Program or Project Title:** St. Louis River Restoration Initiative

**Funds Recommended:** \$ 2,290,000

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**Organization Web Site:**

**Legislative Citation:**

**Appropriation Language:**

**County Locations:** St. Louis

**Ecological Planning Regions:**

- Northern Forest

**Activity Type:**

- Restore

**Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:**

- Habitat

## Abstract:

MDNR will implement a programmatic approach to complete prioritized aquatic habitat restoration projects in the Lower St. Louis River Estuary through a partnership between Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and OHF to recover this nationally important fishery and migratory bird corridor.

## Design and Scope of Work:

The St. Louis River Restoration Initiative (SLRRI) is a programmatic approach to restore more than 1,400 acres of aquatic, wetland and terrestrial habitat within the Lower St. Louis River Estuary over the next 15 to 20 years. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) is working in conjunction with more than 15 partner agencies and organizations, including the MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT), Wisconsin DNR, the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the US Environmental Protection Agency, and the St. Louis River Alliance to prioritize and construct projects that will restore the fisheries and migratory waterfowl habitat of the Estuary. The partnership recently completed the Implementation Framework Project, which resulted in the production of the Stage II Remedial Action Plan (RAP) Update. The update and attached prioritized list of actions establishes the institutional pathway to delist the St. Louis River Estuary as a Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC). The prioritized list of actions comprises what is being defined as the "St. Louis River

Restoration Initiative”, which describes projects that will be critical to return the St. Louis River estuary to one of Minnesota’s and the Great Lakes’ premier recreational fisheries.

The two projects described in this accomplishments plan are being completed through a funding and implementation partnership between MNDNR, NOAA, MLT and OHF. MNDNR has been awarded approximately 4.0 million dollars from NOAA’s Great Lakes Regional Partnership Grant Program, which establishes long-term relationships with state resource management agencies that are completing restoration work in Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC’s). The two projects are included in the NOAA Partnership agreement, with funding budgeted in FFY 2014 and 2015. MNDNR will implement the two projects in cooperation with the MLT.

#### Grassy Point Restoration Project:

Implement Phase I restoration activities within the 180 acre Grassy Point project area. Grassy Point is a 3-4 phase project with objectives accomplished during a timeline that is anticipated to run from SFY 2015 through SFY 2019. The initial phase of engineering design, environmental assessment and permitting for the Grassy Point project, which is being accomplished with a USFWS grant awarded to MLT, will be completed in February of 2014. A partnership between USACE and CWL will then advance the project to being implementation ready by the end of 2014. Phase I project implementation is scheduled to begin during the winter of 2014/2015 or open-water season of 2015. In this Phase approximately 40,000 cubic yards of coarse wood debris will be removed from a 114 acre portion of the project area. The initial phase of the Grassy Point Project will excavate large wood waste from the project site and remove it to an off-site facility for disposal. Future phases of the project will complete additional restoration objectives within the same surface area. the additional activities will include softening of shorelines, additional excavation to achieve desired bathymetry, placement of clean organic material and creation of an island. It is anticipated that future phases of the project will be completed through a continuing funding partnership between the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and OHF. This accomplishment plan covers only completion of Phase I objectives.

Grassy Point Phase I Project outcomes will include:

- 1) Restoration of submerged aquatic vegetation beds on a site degraded by historic log milling activities improving the quality and quantity of habitat for species such as muskellunge, smallmouth bass, walleye and lake sturgeon.
- 2) Enhanced access for recreational anglers and boaters.

#### Shoreline Restoration in Fond du Lac/Chambers Grove:

MNDNR has identified an opportunity to restore approximately 800 feet of shoreline along the St. Louis River immediately upstream of the Highway #23 Bridge. The area between Hwy 23 Bridge and Fond du Lac dam is a special management area for protecting one of the primary spawning areas for Lake Superior/St. Louis River Estuary migratory fish such as walleye, lake sturgeon and longnose sucker as well as resident species such as smallmouth bass and muskellunge. Currently, the river bank is lined by a sheet pile wall originally intended to provide pedestrian access to the river. This structure is severely damaged and considered unsafe. Restoring a natural streambank will provide additional spawning and fry rearing habitat in this critical spawning area. The MNDNR is coordinating with the City of Duluth, the adjacent landowner, so that the shoreline restoration is integrated with ongoing management of Chambers Grove Park.

Fond du Lac/Chambers Grove streambank restoration project outcomes include:

- 1) Restoration of natural streambank features including rocky substrate, littoral zones, streamside vegetation and an accessible floodplain.
- 2) Enhanced in-channel spawning habitat for walleye and longnose sucker and slow water littoral zones for larval and fry sized fish species including muskellunge and lake sturgeon.
- 3) Establishment of angler and other public access to quality fisheries habitat features.

## Planning:

### MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- 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

- H6 Protect and restore critical in-water habitat of lakes and streams

### **Plans Addressed:**

- A Vision for Wildlife and Its Use -- Goals and Outcomes 2006-2012
- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Long Range Plan for Fisheries Management
- Long Range Plan for Muskellunge and Large Northern Pike Management Through 2020
- Lower St. Louis River Habitat Plan
- Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Plans
- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- National Audubon Society Top 20 Common Birds in Decline
- National Fish Habitat Action Plan
- North American Waterbird Conservation Plan
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework
- State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Strategic Habitat Conservation Model
- Lower St. Louis River AOC Implementation Framework - Remedial Action Plan Update

### **LSOHC Statewide Priorities:**

- Address Minnesota landscapes that have historical value to fish and wildlife, 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 long-term or permanent solutions to aquatic invasive species
- Ensures activities for "protecting, restoring and enhancing" are coordinated among agencies, non profits and others while doing this important work; provides the most cost-effective use of financial resources; and where possible takes into consideration the value of local outreach, education, and community engagement to sustain project outcomes
- Leverage effort and/or other funds to supplement any OHF appropriation
- Produce multiple enduring conservation benefits
- Provide Minnesotans with greater public access to outdoor environments with hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation opportunities
- Restore or enhance habitat on permanently protected land
- 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

### **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
- 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
- Clean Water Fund
- Parks and Trails Fund

Clean Water Fund: State resource management agencies (MNDNR and MPCA) have been actively promoting the application of Minnesota's constitutionally dedicated funds to the completion of the St. Louis River Restoration Initiative (SLRRI). The MPCA has been the primary agency coordinating the acquisition of support from the Clean Water Fund (CWF). Because MPCA is primarily interested in water quality issues and the SLRRI is equally driven by the mitigation of degraded water quality and impaired habitat, the CWF will be vitally important to completion of the initiative. MNDNR has closely coordinated with MPCA during the development of the SLRRI and will continue to work toward the effective integration of the CWF and OHF during the completion of this important initiative. To date, the CWF has been matched with funding from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to

characterize contaminated sediments within the entire Minnesota portion of the St. Louis River Area of Concern (AOC). The CWF is also being matched with USACE funds to complete design and environmental review on several projects on the “prioritized list of action” associated with the AOC. It is anticipated that CWF will be matched with Great Lakes Legacy Act funding to mitigate contaminated sediment issues within areas that will also have habitat restoration components.

**Parks and Trails Fund:** The City of Duluth in coordination with the AOC partners has successfully secured support from the Parks and Trails Fund to implement projects that will enhance the opportunity for recreational access to natural resources within the St. Louis River AOC. It is anticipated the partnership with the City of Duluth will be applied to the acquisition of funding to support the expansion of a trail system within the Grassy Point project area. The trail system would include raised walkways through the wetlands, bird and wildlife viewing areas and public fishing piers.

**Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund:** The Trust Fund has not been applied to the implementation of projects within the AOC. However, MNDNR considers this fund to be a critical element to the successful implementation of the SLRRI. MNDNR, along with other AOC partners

## **Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:**

The St. Louis River Restoration Initiative (SLRRI) is an implementation based approach to complete a prioritized list of actions that are identified in the Stage II RAP Update for the St. Louis River Area of Concern (AOC). The MNDNR is acting as primary facilitator of restoration activities on the Minnesota side of the AOC and is working toward the integration of funding sources to complete the restoration projects. MNDNR does not currently have the internal resources necessary for completion of the AOC restoration projects. Completion of the SLRRI is completely dependent upon the acquisition of support from State and Federal funding sources dedicated to the completion of these types of large regional initiatives. Moreover, it will be critically important for the AOC partners, specifically MNDNR, to secure funding from the OHF to meet the goal of delisting the St. Louis River AOC by 2025. It will also be critical for the AOC partners to secure State funding support to maximize the current opportunity for leveraging funding support from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which has no long-term commitment for funding from federal legislators.

## **Sustainability and Maintenance:**

St. Louis River habitat restoration projects are designed to be maintained by the natural processes that define these systems. Barring catastrophic events, these projects would not require future adjustment, or clean-up. For example stream channel restoration construction is designed to mimic natural riffle-pool sequences and be maintained by the hydraulic processes of river flow. Restoration of submerged aquatic vegetation beds will consider the water depth, substrate type and wave energy environment required to maintain these systems.

Healthy and robust native communities are resistant to invasion by exotic species. A concern is the establishment of noxious non-native species such as zebra mussel, purple loosestrife, and Eurasian water milfoil in project sites. If these species successfully establish on a site they can disrupt the foodweb of the native community and result in reduced populations of target species. Timely reseeding or plant establishment with native species immediately following construction activities is one of the best ways to reduce the risk of invasive exotic species establishment.

## **Permanent Protection:**

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

## **Accomplishment Timeline**

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Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Grassy Point Habitat Restoration Project - Phase I	2017
Chambers Grove Shoreline Restoration Project	2016

## Outcomes

**Programs in the northern forest region:**

- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species *Fish and wildlife population outcomes will be measured by State and federal resource management agencies as part of the remedial action planning process for the St. Louis River AOC.*
- Greater public access for wildlife and outdoors-related recreation *This will be measured as acres of aquatic habitat restored to a condition that is accessible to angling and other outdoor based recreational activities.*

## Budget Spreadsheet

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

**Total Amount of Request: \$ 2290000**

### Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$503,700	\$0		\$503,700
Contracts	\$1,617,900	\$1,369,000	NOAA,NOAA	\$2,986,900
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$6,000	\$0		\$6,000
Professional Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	\$147,400	\$0		\$147,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$8,500	\$0		\$8,500
Supplies/Materials	\$6,500	\$0		\$6,500
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$2,290,000	\$1,369,000		\$3,659,000

### Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Project Management	0.65	2.00	\$196,000	\$0		\$196,000
Administrative Assistant	0.75	2.00	\$70,000	\$0		\$70,000
Project Manager	0.75	2.00	\$237,700	\$0		\$237,700
Total	2.15	6.00	\$503,700	\$0		\$503,700

### Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

<b>Budget Name</b>	<b>Partnership</b>	<b>LSOHC Request</b>	<b>Anticipated Leverage</b>	<b>Leverage Source</b>	<b>Total</b>
Personnel	MN Land Trust	\$196,000	\$0		\$196,000
Contracts	MN Land Trust	\$298,000	\$400,000	NOAA	\$698,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	MN Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	MN Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	MN Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	MN Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	MN Land Trust	\$2,000	\$0		\$2,000
Professional Services	MN Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	MN Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	MN Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	MN Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	MN Land Trust	\$2,000	\$0		\$2,000
Supplies/Materials	MN Land Trust	\$2,000	\$0		\$2,000
DNR IDP	MN Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$500,000	\$400,000		\$900,000

### Personnel - MN Land Trust

<b>Position</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Over # of years</b>	<b>LSOHC Request</b>	<b>Anticipated Leverage</b>	<b>Leverage Source</b>	<b>Total</b>
Project Management	0.65	2.00	\$196,000	\$0		\$196,000
Total	0.65	2.00	\$196,000	\$0		\$196,000

Budget Name	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	DNR	\$307,700	\$0		\$307,700
Contracts	DNR	\$1,319,900	\$969,000	NOAA	\$2,288,900
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	DNR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	DNR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	DNR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	DNR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	DNR	\$4,000	\$0		\$4,000
Professional Services	DNR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	DNR	\$147,400	\$0		\$147,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	DNR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	DNR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	DNR	\$6,500	\$0		\$6,500
Supplies/Materials	DNR	\$4,500	\$0		\$4,500
DNR IDP	DNR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$1,790,000	\$969,000		\$2,759,000

### Personnel - DNR

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Administrative Assistant	0.75	2.00	\$70,000	\$0		\$70,000
Project Manager	0.75	2.00	\$237,700	\$0		\$237,700
Total	1.50	4.00	\$307,700	\$0		\$307,700



## Output Tables

**Table 1. Acres by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	115	115
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
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	0	115	115

**Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,290,000	\$2,290,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
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	\$0	\$2,290,000	\$2,290,000

**Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro Urban	Forest Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	115	115
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	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	115	115

**Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro Urban	Forest Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,290,000	\$2,290,000
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	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,290,000	\$2,290,000

**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

St. Louis

<b>Name</b>	<b>TRDS</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Est Cost</b>	<b>Existing Protection?</b>
Chambers Grove Shoreline Restoration	04815206	0	\$500,000	Yes
Grassy Point	04914217	180	\$1,790,000	Yes

### Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type protect.

### 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.