

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

**Date:** December 18, 2013

**Program or Project Title:** Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program - Phase 6

**Funds Recommended:** \$ 10,350,000

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**Legislative Citation:**

**Appropriation Language:**

**County Locations:** Anoka, Blue Earth, Carver, Jackson, Lyon, Martin, Murray, Redwood, Stearns, and Wright.

**Ecological Planning Regions:**

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Metro / Urban
- Prairie

**Activity Type:**

- Protect in Fee

**Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:**

- Prairie
- Wetlands

## Abstract:

This proposal accelerates the protection of 1,362 acres of prairie grassland, wetland, and other wildlife habitat as State Wildlife Management Areas open to public hunting.

## 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) 1,362 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. Fish and Wildlife Service Strategic Habitat Conservation Model
- U.S. Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Plan

### **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
- Are ongoing, successful, transparent and accountable programs addressing actions and targets of one or more of the ecological sections
- Attempts to ensure conservation benefits are broadly distributed across the LSOHC sections
- 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 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

### **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
- 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

## **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 the mass amounts of CRP acres 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.

## Government Approval:

*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.

## Permanent Protection:

*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.

## Hunting and Fishing Plan:

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

No Variation from State of Minnesota regulations.

## Accomplishment Timeline

	Approximate Date
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Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Identify priority acquisitions	07/01/2014
Contract appraisals ordered	09/01/2014
Purchase agreements	02/01/2015
Re-evaluate tract priority	02/15/2015
Contract appraisals ordered	04/01/2015
Purchase agreements	07/01/2015
Close on tracts	01/01/2016
Restoration completed	06/30/2016
Lands donated	06/30/2016

## Outcomes

### Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need *Number of acres of wetlands and uplands protected and restored.*
- Water is kept on the land *Number, wetland type, and total acres of wetlands restored.*
- Improved access to public lands.

Measurement and Evaluation: Number of additional acres open for public use. Number of new WMAs created.

### Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need *Number of acres protected and restored within wildlife corridors.*
- Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting *Number of wetlands protected and restored. Number of acquisitions that provide additional access to existing public lands.*
- Improved access to public lands.

Measurement and Evaluation: Number of additional acres open for public use. Number of new WMAs created.

### Programs in prairie region:

- Expiring CRP lands are permanently protected *Number of acres of expiring CRP acquired.*
- Agriculture lands are converted to grasslands to sustain functioning prairie systems *Number of acres of agricultural lands removed from row crop production.*
- Improved access to public lands *Number of additional acres open for public use. Number of new WMAs created.*
- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species *Number of acres of wetlands and uplands protected and restored.*

# Budget Spreadsheet

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

**Total Amount of Request: \$ 10350000**

## Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$90,000	\$0		\$90,000
Contracts	\$421,000	\$65,000	PF, Private, Federal	\$486,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$9,515,500	\$277,000	PF, Private, Federal	\$9,792,500
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$3,500	\$0		\$3,500
Professional Services	\$85,000	\$0		\$85,000
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	\$195,000	\$0		\$195,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$10,350,000	\$342,000		\$10,692,000

## Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF Director of Conservation	0.08	3.00	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
PF Regional Field Staff	0.08	3.00	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
PF National Grants Staff	0.20	3.00	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
Total	0.36	9.00	\$90,000	\$0		\$90,000

## 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	340	1,022	0	0	1,362
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	340	1,022	0	0	1,362

**Table 1b. How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie?**

Type	Native Prairie
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	0
Total	0

**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	\$2,588,000	\$7,762,000	\$0	\$0	\$10,350,000
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	\$2,588,000	\$7,762,000	\$0	\$0	\$10,350,000

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

Type	Metro Urban	Forest Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	130	324	0	908	0	1,362
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	130	324	0	908	0	1,362

**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	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$1,576,000	\$1,478,000	\$0	\$7,296,000	\$0	\$10,350,000
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	\$1,576,000	\$1,478,000	\$0	\$7,296,000	\$0	\$10,350,000

**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

Anoka

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Carlos Avery WMA Addition	03222221	160	\$1,000,000	No	Full	Full

Blue Earth

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Maple River WMA Addition	10627222	108	\$700,000	No	Full	Full

Carver

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Paterson Lake WMA	11625220	320	\$3,200,000	No	Full	Full
Tiger Marsh WMA Addition	11526209	100	\$1,000,000	No	Full	Full

Jackson

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Teal Lake WMA Addition	10436230	185	\$1,665,000	No	Full	Full

Lyon

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Sodus WMA Addition	11042236	177	\$1,200,000	No	Full	Full

Martin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Gruven WMA	10330235	134	\$800,000	No	Full	Full

Murray

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Shetek Inlet WMA	10841211	99	\$700,000	No	Full	Full

Redwood

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Lamberton WMA Addition	10936217	160	\$1,000,000	No	Full	Full

Stearns

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Mel Roehrl Tr 3 WMA Addition	12435204	80	\$500,000	No	Full	Full
Mel Roehrl Tr 4 WMA Addition	12435205	80	\$500,000	No	Full	Full

Wright

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Clearwater WMA	12227222	615	\$4,000,000	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.