

Request for Funding

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Fiscal Year 2015 / ML 2014

Program or Project Title: Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program ML2014

Funds Requested: \$5,000,000

Manager's Name: Jessica Lee

Title: CPL Grant Program Coordinator

Organization: MN DNR

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Organization Web Site:

County Locations: No Counties Listed

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Southeast Forest
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban

Activity Type:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore
- Enhance
- Protect in Fee

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Wetlands
- Forest
- Prairie
- Habitat

Abstract:

The Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program will be managed by the Department of Natural Resources to provide competitive matching grants of up to \$400,000 to local, regional, state, and national non-profit organizations and government entities.

Design and Scope of Work:

The CPL program fulfills MS 97a.056 Subd. 3a, directing LSOHC to establish a conservation partner's grant program encouraging/supporting local conservation efforts. \$4,540,000 of the requested \$5,000,000 will be available for grants. This is a stand-alone program, but depends on support/technical advice from public land managers, habitat and acquisition specialists, and support staff.

Grant activities include enhancement, restoration and protection of forests, wetlands, prairies, and habitat for fish,

game, or wildlife in Minnesota. A 10% match from nonstate sources is required for all grants. Match may be cash or in-kind, and must be identified at time of application.

CPL Program Staff will develop a Request for Proposal (RFP)/Program Manual incorporating LSOHC priorities. Staff will solicit applications, work with applicants to submit scorable applications, oversee grant selection, and prepare/execute grant documents. Staff will also review expenditure documentation ensuring financial integrity, process payment requests, monitor grant work, assist recipients with closing out agreements, and prepare required reports.

Applicants will describe the project location, activity type, and benefit to habitat, fish, game and wildlife. The CPL staff complies with the Department of Administration-Office of Grants Management policies. Stakeholders involved in this program include applicants, reviewers, and land managers. No opposition is known.

Application Process

The RFP/Program Manual will be posted on the CPL website in August 2015. The traditional Over \$25K/Under \$25K grant cycle will have one guaranteed grant round and a second round if funds remain. Applications will be accepted online through mid-September for Round 1. Projects under \$25,000 will have a simplified application.

The Expedited Conservation Projects grant cycle will be open continuously beginning in August, and applications will be awarded up to 5 times through May 2016, depending on available funds.

DNR may choose to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with DNR and OHF policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available or if a grantee cannot complete a project as planned.

Grant Selection Process

CPL Grant Program Staff will review applications for eligibility. Technical Review Committees, selected by the Commissioner of Natural Resources, evaluate applications based on criteria listed below. A final score will be given to all applications. Committees include representatives from DNR, BWSR, the University of MN, state universities or private colleges, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, or other appropriate members from government, non-profit and business organizations. A final ranking committee comprised of Directors of the DNR Divisions of Fish and Wildlife, Ecological Resources/Waters, and Forestry consider TRC, Division and Regional DNR comments, and recommend projects/funding levels to the Commissioner. ECP Grants will be reviewed by CPL staff and DNR habitat experts using criteria established for each type of project. The Commissioner will make final funding decisions.

CPL Grant Program staff work with grantees to complete financial reviews, grant agreements, and other paperwork. Work may not begin until grant is executed.

Application Criteria

Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

Amount of habitat restored, enhanced, or protected

Local support

Degree of collaboration

Urgency

Multiple benefits

Habitat benefits

Consistency with current conservation science

Adjacent to protected lands

Full funding of project

Budget/ cost effectiveness

Public access for hunting/fishing

Use of native plant materials

Applicants' capacity to successfully complete, sustain work

Project Reviews and Reporting

Grantees submit annual accomplishment reports on forms provided by CPL staff, based on L-SOHC report forms. Reports account for the use of grant/match funds, and outcomes in measures of wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat restored, enhanced, and protected. The report must include an evaluation of these results. A final report is required by all grantees 30 days after project completion. CPL Grant staff will submit accomplishment reports to L-SOHC as required and post reports on CPL website.

CPL Administration Budget

Grant administration costs of \$460,000 will be billed using actual costs. Costs include salary/fringe for grants staff, direct support services, travel, supplies, and outreach. An internal Service Level Agreement (SLA) will be developed with DNR's Management Information Systems to update/manage the online grant application system.

Three FTEs are necessary to run an ongoing grant program with a cumulative budget of over \$20 million. As of May 2013, there are 148 active grants, and an additional 42 grants have recently been completed and closed. Having 3 FTEs will ensure that the CPL program is able to effectively promote the program, monitor grants, and meet all program requirements.

DNR Land Acquisition Costs

Applicants are required to budget for DNR Land Acquisition costs that are necessary to support the land acquisition process for parcels to be conveyed to the DNR. These costs are billed to awarded grants on a professional services basis. DNR Technical Support The Division of Fish and Wildlife provides ongoing technical guidance, helping applicants prepare grant proposals and meet requirements for working on state lands. Project development and oversight is provided by area managers and additional guidance is provided for land acquisitions.

Grantee Payment

Grantees are paid on a reimbursement or "for services rendered" basis, meaning payment is made to the grantee after work has been performed or materials have been purchased, but before the vendor is paid by the grantee. Grantees must provide proof that work has been completed or a purchase has been made in order to receive payment. Proof that the vendor was paid must be submitted to CPL staff before additional grant payments are made. Funds may be advanced to projects to accommodate cash flow needs for acquisitions.

Funds are built into grants for required Legacy signage and acknowledgement/notification of completed projects (such as local news advertisements).

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
- H6 Protect and restore critical in-water habitat of lakes and streams
- H7 Keep water on the landscape
- LU6 Reduce Upland and gully erosion through soil conservation practices
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land
- LU10 Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands

Plans Addressed:

- A Vision for Wildlife and Its Use -- Goals and Outcomes 2006-2012
- Driftless Area Restoration Effort
- Ducks Unlimited Living Lakes Initiative
- Grassland Bird Conservation Area
- Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse
- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Long Range Plan for Fisheries Management
- Long Range Plan for Muskellunge and Large Northern Pike Management Through 2020
- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN
- Long Range Plan for the Wild Turkey
- Lower St. Louis River Habitat Plan
- Managing Minnesota's Shallow Lakes for Waterfowl and Wildlife
- Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership
- Minnesota DNR AMA Acquisition Plan
- Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Plans
- Minnesota DNR Scientific and Natural Area's Long Range Plan
- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Minnesota Sustainability Framework
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years
- Mississippi River Headwaters Comprehensive Plan
- Moose Advisory Committee Report to the Minnesota DNR
- National Audubon Society Top 20 Common Birds in Decline
- National Fish Habitat Action Plan
- North American Waterbird Conservation Plan
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- Northern Plains Prairie Potholes Regional Shorebird Conservation Plan
- Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecoregion: A River and Stream Conservation Portfolio
- Northern Tallgrass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area (HPA) Final Environmental Impact Statement
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework
- Partners in Flight Conservation Plans for States and Physiographic Regions
- Partners in Flight Grassland Bird Plan
- Red River of the North Fisheries Management Plan
- Ruffed Grouse in Minnesota: A Long-Range Plan for Management
- State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Strategic Plan for Coldwater Resources Management in Southeastern Minnesota
- Superior National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan
- The Nature Conservancy's Superior Mixed Forest Ecoregional 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
- Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Projects Joint Ventures 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 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, 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

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 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
- Provide access to manage habitat on landlocked public properties or protect forest land from parcelization and fragmentation through fee acquisition, conservation or access easement
- 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
- Restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in area in recent decades

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 habitat corridors, with emphasis on the Minnesota, Mississippi, and St. Croix rivers (bluff to floodplain)
- Enhance and restore coldwater fisheries systems
- Protect, enhance, and restore riparian and littoral habitats on lakes to benefit game and nongame fish species

LSOHC Southeast Forest Section Priorities:

- Protect forest habitat through acquisition in fee or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties
- Protect, enhance, and restore habitat for fish, game, and nongame wildlife in rivers, cold-water streams, and associated upland habitat
- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant goat prairies
- Restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in area in recent decades

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund
- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund
- Clean Water Fund
- Parks and Trails Fund

The CPL grant program has the potential to complement all of these other programs and projects supported with constitutional funds by allowing organizations to access Outdoor Heritage Funds for smaller, local projects. Lack of funding is consistently listed in many plans as one of the largest issues limiting the amount of habitat work and protection that is completed each year. Specific benefits are dependent upon projects submitted by applicants.

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

Currently, the CPL program staff is managing 148 active grants from four years of appropriations that have impacted every habitat type and every area of the State. Over 10,000 acres have been restored, enhanced or protected since the CPL program was established. Offering another year of CPL grants to conservation clubs in Minnesota makes it possible to fund more projects that will increase the number of acres that enhance, restore and protect Minnesota's fish, game and wildlife habitat. Lack of funding is consistently listed in many plans as one of the largest issues limiting the amount of habitat work and protection that is completed each year. Specific benefits are dependent upon projects submitted by applicants.

Sustainability and Maintenance:

Projects on public lands will be the responsibility of the government entity that owns or accepts the land. Projects on private lands will be the responsibility of the private land owner and easement holder. Stewardship plans must identify the sources and amount of funding for monitoring and identify the parties responsible for monitoring and enforcing the easement agreement. Because the actual projects have not been identified at this time, it is not possible to provide specific details on the cost, schedule, and sources of funding needed to sustain CPL projects.

Government Approval:

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

Permanent Protection:

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

Hunting and Fishing Plan:

Is this land open for hunting and fishing? - Yes

Public access will depend on the requirements of the title holder.

Public Use:

Will the eased land be open for public use? - Yes

Public access will depend on the requirements of the easement holder.

Permanent Protection:

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

Permanent Protection:

Is the activity on permanently protected land and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15? - **Yes (WMA, WPA, SNA, AMA, Private Land, County/Municipal, Refuge Lands, Public Waters, State Wilderness Areas, State Recreation Areas, State Forests)**

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Solicit applications: RFP/Program Manual posted online	August 2015
First round applications due (ECP applications accepted continuously)	September 2015
First round grantees announced	December 2015
First round grants encumbered	February 2016
Grantees begin work	March 2016
Solicit and select round 2 applications, if needed	Jan-Feb 2016
Round 2 applications due	February 2016
Round 2 grantees announced	May 2016
Round 2 grants encumbered	June 2016
Round 2 grantees start work	July 2016
Grant monitoring continues, per OGM policy	August 2016
Annual grantee reports due	September 2016
Program report to the Council	August 2016

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- All outcomes are dependent on grantees' project choices.

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- All outcomes are dependent on grantees' project choices.

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- All outcomes are dependent on grantees' project choices.

Programs in southeast forest region:

- All outcomes are dependent on grantees' project choices.

Programs in prairie region:

- All outcomes are dependent on grantees' project choices.

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$5,000,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$380,000	\$0		\$380,000
Contracts	\$4,540,000	\$454,000		\$4,994,000
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	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
Professional Services	\$32,000	\$0		\$32,000
Direct Support Services	\$34,000	\$0		\$34,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$2,000	\$0		\$2,000
Supplies/Materials	\$2,000	\$0		\$2,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$5,000,000	\$454,000	-	\$5,454,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Grants Coordinator	1.00	2.00	\$140,000	\$0		\$140,000
Grants Specialist	1.00	2.00	\$110,000	\$0		\$110,000
NR Specialist	1.00	2.00	\$130,000	\$0		\$130,000
Total	3.00	6.00	\$380,000	\$0	-	\$380,000

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	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	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	\$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	\$0	\$0

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	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0

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	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles

0 miles

Parcel List

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

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.