

Request for Funding

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

Program or Project Title: Dynamic Forest Conservation

Funds Requested: \$4,241,800

Manager's Name: George Fenwick

Title:

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County Locations: Becker, and Mille Lacs.

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity Type:

- Restore
- Protect in Fee

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Forest

Abstract:

ABC will provide expertise and significant funding to Minnesota partners to: protect 1,000 acres and restore 7,500 acres of dynamic forest landscapes; meet Minnesota wildlife plan goals; create jobs; leverage \$500,000 additional funding; and provide new birdwatching and hunting opportunities.

Design and Scope of Work:

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and its partners in Minnesota's Young Forest Partnership are very grateful for the current FY2014 LSOHC grant of \$1.18 million to protect or restore dynamic forest landscapes. Minnesota is the key state in an international initiative to prevent Golden-winged Warblers (GWWA), a species that has seen a steep population decline, from being listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act or upgraded on the global IUCN list of species in need of immediate conservation action. To accomplish this, high quality young forest habitat within mature forests of varying ages must be created in GWWA focal areas in ten states using GWWA Best Management Practices. **Minnesota has the highest number of breeding GWWAs in the country**

and the second highest population of breeding American Woodcock, another young forest specialist that is a species of conservation concern. Successfully meeting GWWA population goals **will require restoring or maintaining at least 23,000 acres of high quality young forest a year, over the next ten years, in Minnesota**. These habitats will measurably increase habitat for the greatest number of young forest-dependent species listed as Minnesota's conservation priorities because GWWAs have the most specialized habitat requirements; they will not occupy generic young forest clearings. By creating new areas open to birdwatching and hunting, this work also supports the \$97+ million the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports being spent in Minnesota annually by people who feed or watch birds.

ABC is pleased to report that the two main goals of the FY2014 LSOHC grant - fee acquisition of 400 acres adjacent to Four Brooks Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and restoration of 1,100 acres - are on track to be completed this year. The Conservation Fund currently has a purchase contract to buy 480 acres adjacent to Four Brooks WMA that will close in August 2013. In addition, LSOHC support for this work has enabled ABC to secure an additional \$384,955 from national sources to assist in restoring an additional 1,192 acres in young forest restoration on public and private lands in Minnesota GWWA focal areas.

Interest from public and private landowners in Minnesota in participating in this initiative to create dynamic, high functioning, multi-use forests is growing rapidly, resulting in more opportunities to protect or restore high quality GWWA habitat than current funding can cover.

With additional funding from FY2015 LSOHC, ABC and Minnesota partners will build upon the successes of the current LSOHC grant and make rapid progress toward meeting the long-term dynamic forest habitat goals needed to prevent the listing of the GWWA by:

(1) Permanently protecting (fee acquisition from willing sellers) approximately **1,000 acres of targeted high priority forest** adjacent to the Mille Lacs WMA and Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The Conservation Fund will negotiate the land protection; ultimate ownership and long-term management will be the responsibility of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources or USFWS. These properties will become part of a larger collection of public lands that will be managed to create a dynamic forest landscape that optimizes critical habitats and forest types for a range of targeted species including Golden-winged Warbler and American Woodcock.

(2) Creating 7,500 acres of young forest habitat within forested landscapes of diverse age-classes. The availability of forested landscapes that have a mixture of different aged forests is scientifically documented to be important to Golden-winged Warblers, American Woodcock, and many other species of greatest conservation need. ABC's partners in Minnesota have identified areas on several public lands/partners that are in need of management activities intended to return some young forest habitat to expansive areas of relatively even-aged, older forests.

ABC's first phase of LSOHC funding (FY 2014) is focused primarily on the creation of young forest habitat in and around Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent public lands. The majority of the 1100 acres of young forest habitat ABC committed to creating in the FY 2014 LSOHC proposal has already been identified on Tamarac NWR and is in

the process of being prepared and/or contracted out for treatment.

ABC will continue to work closely with public land managers and other conservation partners to identify and prioritize specific tracts on various public lands managed by Tamarac NWR, MN DNR-Wildlife, MN DNR and Becker County. ABC will work closely with MN DNR's Nongame staff, USFWS staff and other members of the scientific community to ensure the best science available for GWWA conservation is being used and adapted to Minnesota conditions. Additionally, ABC's Public Lands Coordinator will initiate discussions with the managers of other public lands with potential for management to benefit Golden-winged Warblers including: Clearwater Co., Rice Lake NWR, Sherburne NWR, and Beltrami County. Once specific tracts are identified and prioritized, our partnership will develop site plans, solicit bids for treatment, oversee management activities, and conduct post-management monitoring. The recently published, scientifically-based, *Best Management Practices for Golden-winged Warblers in the Great Lakes Region*, will serve as the foundation of the proposed management activities.

(3) In coordination with our partners, ABC will work with public and private stakeholders to map out a plan and provide an accounting of how many public and private acres of forested habitat are currently within the Minnesota GWWA focal areas, their relative age, and how to annually meet the goal of 23,000 acres of breeding habitat for GWWAs. We will also evaluate and report GWWA response to restored habitat, and provide training and technical support for public and private foresters to implement GWWA BMPS.

(4) Provide and install informational signs on properties acquired with LSOHC funds. Acquired properties will be owned and managed by either Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge or Mille Lacs WMA. ABC and its partners will use the habitat management projects at these sites as demonstration areas for other potential private and public landowners in the area.

If these activities are funded through FY2015 LSOHC, ABC anticipates it can leverage LSOHC funding to attract to Minnesota an additional \$500,000 for the protection, maintenance, and restoration of dynamic forest landscapes.

Planning

MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- 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
- Ducks Unlimited Living Lakes Initiative
- Grassland Bird Conservation Area
- Long Range Plan for the Wild Turkey

- Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Plans
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years
- National Audubon Society Top 20 Common Birds in Decline
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework
- Partners in Flight Conservation Plans for States and Physiographic Regions
- Partners in Flight Grassland Bird Plan
- Ruffed Grouse in Minnesota: A Long-Range Plan for Management
- State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare
- 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 migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

LSOHC Northern Forest Section Priorities:

- 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

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- No Relationships Listed

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

ABC and its Minnesota partners have a long-term goal of creating, restoring, and managing 23,000 acres of young forest habitat within scientifically defined GWWA breeding focal areas in Minnesota to prevent the listing of GWWAs through the Endangered Species Act and to benefit more than a dozen other species of conservation concern in Minnesota. This proposal supplements and accelerates current efforts using LSOHC and other private and public funding to protect, create and manage young forest habitat in Minnesota GWWA focal areas as part of a dynamic, multi-age forest system by enabling ABC and its partners to act on priority land protection and restoration opportunities that have arisen for which significant additional funding is needed. This proposal will enable ABC and its partners to triple the amount of targeted forest properties acquired and quadruple the amount

of young forest habitat created within GWWA focal areas.

This project also continues and expands the important work initiated by the Minnesota Young Forest partnership through a Conservation Partners Legacy grant by creating and protecting forest habitat critical for Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock and other game species.

Sustainability and Maintenance:

A major strength of this project is the demonstrated, long-term commitment of its many partners to creating and maintaining sufficient young forest habitat within dynamic forest systems in Minnesota to sustain healthy populations of Golden-winged Warblers, American Woodcock, Ruffed Grouse and other wildlife indefinitely.

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**

Hunting and Fishing Regulations Not Listed

Permanent Protection:

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

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Purchase 560 acres of forest adjacent to Mille Lacs Wildlife Management Area	December 31, 2015
Purchase 500 acres of forest adjacent to Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge	December 31, 2015
Restore 7,500 acres of Young Forest in Golden-winged Warbler focal areas in Minnesota	December 31, 2018
Provide training and technical support for public and private foresters to implement GWWA BMPs	December 31, 2018
With all stakeholders, map out a plan for meeting goal in Minnesota of 23,000 acres of young forest as part of a dynamic forest management mix in GWWA focal areas	December 31, 2015
Evaluate and report GWWA response to restored habitats to wildlife managers and the public	December 31, 2018

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation *Acres restored and acres permanently protected will be tracked*
- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species *ABC will work with its partners to assess Golden-winged Warbler response*
- Landlocked public properties have increased access for land managers *Part of the targeting of land acquisitions is to improve management access*

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need *Acres restored to dynamic, young forest management and acres protected to be managed as dynamic, young forest type will be tracked*
- Wetland and upland complexes will consist of native prairies, restored prairies, quality grasslands, and restored shallow lakes and wetlands *Acres protected and restored as a dynamic and multi-faceted landscape is a cornerstone of this project and will be tracked*
- Increased waterfowl and upland bird migratory and breeding success *Success of Golden-winged Warbler and American Woodcock breeding will be tracked*

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$4,241,800

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$261,800	\$321,600		\$583,400
Contracts	\$2,361,100	\$100,000	Private Source	\$2,461,100
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,500,000	\$0		\$1,500,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$22,400	\$36,000	Private Source	\$58,400
Professional Services	\$68,000	\$0		\$68,000
Direct Support Services	\$25,000	\$65,000	Private Source	\$90,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$1,500	\$0		\$1,500
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$2,000	\$0		\$2,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$4,241,800	\$522,600	-	\$4,764,400

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MN Coordinator	1.00	4.00	\$261,800	\$0		\$261,800
MN NRCS Coordinator	1.00	4.00	\$0	\$261,800		\$261,800
ABC Mig Bird Director	0.10	4.00	\$0	\$30,800	Private Source	\$30,800
ABC VP Conservation	0.05	4.00	\$0	\$29,000	Private Source	\$29,000
Total	2.15	16.00	\$261,800	\$321,600	-	\$583,400

Output Tables

Table 1. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	7,500	0	7,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	1,060	0	1,060
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	8,560	0	8,560

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$2,668,800	\$0	\$2,668,800
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$1,573,000	\$0	\$1,573,000
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	\$4,241,800	\$0	\$4,241,800

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	7,500	7,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	500	0	0	560	1,060
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	500	0	0	8,060	8,560

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$160,100	\$0	\$0	\$2,508,700	\$2,668,800
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$692,100	\$0	\$0	\$880,900	\$1,573,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$852,200	\$0	\$0	\$3,389,600	\$4,241,800

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

Becker

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Tamarac #1	14039210	300	\$540,000	No	Full	
Tamarac #2	14039216	200	\$360,000	No	Full	

Mille Lacs

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Mille Lacs #1	04027232	560	\$600,000	No	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.