

# Request for Funding

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

**Program or Project Title:** Protect (Acquire) Key Forest Habitat Lands - Cass County Phase V

**Funds Requested:** \$2,027,600

**Manager's Name:** Joshua Stevenson

**Title:** Land Commissioner

**Organization:** Cass County

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**Organization Web Site:**

**County Locations:** No Counties Listed

### Ecological Planning Regions:

- Northern Forest

### Activity Type:

- Protect in Fee

### Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Forest

## Abstract:

Project will protect forest wildlife habitat in central Minnesota through fee title acquisition of key forest tracts. Title of lands acquired will be held by Cass County in Fee.

## Design and Scope of Work:

**Problem:** Central Minnesota, especially the area in Cass County from Brainerd/Baxter to Walker, has and will continue to see some of the fastest human population growth in Minnesota. This growth will lead to increased demands/use of this area, its natural resources and related public land base that needs to support this growth. Development of these parcels has resulted in the loss of Jack Pine barrens in the landscape of southern Cass County. Forest tracts currently undeveloped, held by Potlatch and other private property owners, are currently being sold to private developers. These lands often provide access to existing public lands for resource management, are in holdings in otherwise unfragmented landscapes, create contiguous wildlife corridors, and protect larger blocks of land especially useful for stand level management of habitat.

**Opportunity:** Key forest tracts (i.e. in-holdings in large public land tracts, management access issues, etc.) are being considered or currently being offered for sale by a large industrial forest owner (Potlatch Corporation) and private property owners in this area. Depressed market conditions and a willingness by current owners to sell at this time is an opportunity that should be addressed now since it is narrow and may close (properties sold) at any time. The strategy is to acquire lands that hold together unfragmented landscapes, avoid incompatible in holding development or creates habitat corridors. The land acquired has existing forest access roads that have been

used for management access for years. The sale of these lands to private individuals has already resulted in the loss of access for resource management on public lands. The acquired lands are not being pursued for convenience of management.

The identified parcels play a key role in future management plans of the Jack Pine Barrens including the role of fire as a management tool. The loss of these parcels to private ownership will result in lost access. Management of adjacent public lands will be limited to frozen ground conditions. This will eliminate management tools such as site preparation for Jack Pine plantings and aerial seeding as well as prescribed burns for Jack Pine regeneration. This type of management requires year round access. The acquired lands provide year round management access to existing public lands in the Jack Pine barrens landscape. The acquisition of these lands will provide permanent year round access for forest management as well as protecting habitat in and around the surrounding areas.

The Cass County Forest Resource Management Plan directs the County to acquire lands of this nature whenever possible to protect our management access. The Cass County Comprehensive plan requires no net loss of acres of public land and local unit of government input on all purchases and land sales. This project meets the requirements of both plans and will require stakeholder input as part of the project. The local units of government with the lands to be purchased will be contacted for input before any acquisitions are made. Recent purchases of this nature have been supported by both the County and local units of government. The Cass County Board of Commissioners has a strong history of supporting land sales and acquisitions that have local unit of government support.

## 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
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land
- LU10 Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands

### **Plans Addressed:**

- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans

### **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
- 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

### **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

## Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- No Relationships Listed

## Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

The Cass County Forest Resource Management Plan directs the County to acquire lands of this nature whenever possible. The Cass County Comprehensive plan requires no net loss of acres of public land (Page 34 & 57) (FRMP Page 32) and local unit of government input on all purchases and sales of land. Priorities supported in these plans that are accomplished in this project include: access to inaccessible public land, consolidation of ownership, management for wildlife habitat, and landscape level management between multiple land management agencies. The lands acquired will be open to the public for fishing and the taking of game.

## Sustainability and Maintenance:

The Cass County Land Department manages all County Administered lands under our Forest Resource Management Plan. This management plan requires that operations are maintained from revenue generated from timber sales. Cass County has a long history of covering our operation costs with timber revenue. The lands acquired will be managed under this same plan. These lands are not eligible for PILT payments. MN Statute 477A.11 defines lands that are eligible as being held by the state in fee or tax forfeited. The acquired lands for this project will be held in fee by Cass County and therefore are not eligible for PILT Payments. There will be no ongoing cost to the State of MN for the acquisition of these lands.

## 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**

All Cass County Administered Land is open to the public for fishing, hunting, and the taking of game.

## Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Meet with LUGs and prepare purchase agreements	March 2015
Contract for appraisals and Acquire Lands in Fee	June 2015
Record Deeds	July 2015

## Outcomes

### **Programs in the northern forest region:**

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation *Strategic parcels are selected based on location in proximity to other public lands.*
- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species *Strategic parcels are selected based on known locations of RTE species.*
- Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors *Parcels are selected to ensure habitat corridors remain intact.*
- Landlocked public properties have increased access for land managers *Summer access provides opportunity for a variety of forest management techniques.*
- Greater public access for wildlife and outdoors-related recreation *Parcel are selected to provide summer access or legal access to existing public lands.*

# Budget Spreadsheet

**Total Amount of Request: \$2,027,600**

## Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$0	\$37,000		\$37,000
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$2,010,800	\$0		\$2,010,800
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$16,800	\$13,200	Cass County	\$30,000
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	\$2,027,600	\$50,200	-	\$2,077,800

## Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Resource Manager	0.25	5.00	\$0	\$18,500	Cass County	\$18,500
Land Commissioner	0.25	5.00	\$0	\$18,500	Cass County	\$18,500
Total	0.50	10.00	\$0	\$37,000	-	\$37,000

## 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	1,223	0	1,223
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	1,223	0	1,223

**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	\$2,027,600	\$0	\$2,027,600
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$2,027,600	\$0	\$2,027,600

**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	1,223	1,223
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	1,223	1,223

**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	\$2,027,600	\$2,027,600
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,027,600	\$2,027,600

**Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles**

2 miles

# Parcel List

## Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

## Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Cass

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
02-006-4400	13829206	42	\$67,300	No	Full	Full
10-004-4300	13731204	81	\$119,700	No	Full	Full
16-025-3300	14031225	79	\$178,600	No	Full	Full
16-034-2300	14031234	40	\$90,700	No	Full	Full
16-035-4300	14031235	81	\$159,200	No	Full	Full
16-036-3200	14031236	40	\$67,200	No	Full	Full
28-122-1100	14429222	128	\$178,700	No	Full	Full
28-123-2100	14429223	92	\$122,000	No	Full	Full
31-001-4300	13830201	41	\$73,400	No	Full	Full
31-012-1100	13830212	160	\$273,000	No	Full	Full
31-029-1100	13830229	360	\$573,400	No	Full	Full
47-027-4100	14425227	80	\$107,600	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.