

# Request for Funding

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

**Program or Project Title:** Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program - Phase 6

**Funds Requested: \$12,350,000**

**Manager's Name:** Joe Pavelko

**Title:** MN Director of Conservation

**Organization:** Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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**County Locations:** Bigstone, Blue Earth, Carver, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Kandiyohi , Lac qui Parle, Lincoln , Lyon, McLeod, Pope, Sibley, and Yellow Medicine.

### Ecological Planning Regions:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban

### Activity Type:

- Protect in Fee

### Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

## Abstract:

This proposal accelerates the permanent protection of 1,500 acres of wetlands (600 acres) and grasslands (900 acres) as Waterfowl Production Areas open to public hunting in Minnesota.

## Design and Scope of Work:

The loss of grassland and wetland habitats in Minnesota is well documented. One of the primary ways to reverse this downward trend is to permanently acquire and restore previously converted wetland and grassland habitats on those properties. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and their partners have been employing this strategy for over 50-years with the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program (SWAP). This sixth phase of the acceleration program acquires AND restores 600 acres of wetland and 900 acres of grassland habitats which will be permanently protected as Waterfowl Protection Areas managed by the Service. Using landscape level planning tools [e.g. Thunderstorm Maps produced by the Service's Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET)], Pheasants Forever (PF) will acquire strategically identified properties. Based on HAPET evaluation strategies, modeling predictions can be made on the numbers of nesting waterfowl, grassland nesting birds, and other wildlife the acres affected by this grant application will produce. Besides the obvious wildlife benefits, once restored, the lands acquired through this grant will provide additional water quality, groundwater recharge, and flood abatement benefits. These strategies are well tested and are supported by the greater conservation community here in Minnesota. Hunting and fishing stakeholders are very interested in increasing opportunities for

hunting and fishing public access and have used WPA's extensively in the past. To address concerns related to the erosion of county tax revenues due to public land, the Service and PF will notify counties prior to acquisition of lands. Once acquired, the Service will make a one-time Trust Fund payment to the County where the property is located. In addition, the Service will make annual Refuge Revenue Sharing payments for all fee lands within the respective Counties.

Funding for restoration of the properties will be solicited from partners. If this funding is available, budgeted Outdoor Heritage restoration funds under this proposal would be able to accomplish additional fee title w/o PILT acquisition funds. Wetlands, on the properties acquired, will be restored by either surface ditch "plugs" or breaking sub-surface tile lines. Grasslands will be restored by planting appropriate native grasses and forbs to converted grassland habitats. Grassland restoration on individual tracts may take three to five years and involve one to two years of post acquisition farming to prepare the seed base, one year for seeding and one to two years to establish.

## 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:**

- 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
- 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
- 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 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
- 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 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, enhance, and restore riparian and littoral habitats on lakes to benefit game and nongame fish species

## **Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:**

- No Relationships Listed

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

WPAs are acquired with funds derived from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps and managed for wildlife and conservation benefits as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Land acquisition and restoration have not kept pace with habitat restoration needs or the backlog of willing sellers. The Service's Midwest Region receives on average \$5,000,000 annually from duck stamp proceeds to purchase lands for WPAs in Minnesota. 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 grant monies received for this project will result in fee title transfers of additional land into the National Wildlife Refuge System. The long-term protection and management of these habitats will be the responsibility of the Service, an agency that employs professional managers, biologists, field staffs, realty staff, and enforcement officers and has an annual operating budget designated specifically for the management of Refuge resources. Wetlands and their contributing watersheds will be protected and prairie habitats monitored and managed. The Service has an active, professional prescribed burning program and utilizes fire to reduce woody invasion of prairies, enhance diversity, and rejuvenate uplands. Biological, mechanical, and sometimes chemical treatments are used as needed in an integrated management approach to provide high quality migration and breeding habitats. Acquisitions in the project will be targeted to complete the restoration of large wetland complexes surrounded by native or planted tall grass prairie uplands.

## **Government Approval:**

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition? - **No**

We will notify local government in writing of the intent to acquire and donate lands to the Service and follow up with questions prior to acquisition.

## Permanent Protection:

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection? - **No**

Some of the parcels may have a federal or state easement which provides permanent protection for wetlands or grasslands. If a parcel has one of these encumbrances, and is still 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 residual value of the protected portion of the property.

## Hunting and Fishing Plan:

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

All acquired lands will be open to the public taking of fish and game during the open season according to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, United States Code, title 16, section 668dd, et seq.

## Accomplishment Timeline

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	02/14/2015
Contract appraisals ordered	04/01/2015
Purchase agreements	07/01/2015
Close on tracts	01/01/2016
Restoration completed	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 WPAs 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 WPAs created.

**Programs in prairie region:**

- Expiring CRP lands are permanently protected *Number of acres of expiring CRP acquired.*
- Improved access to public lands *Number of additional acres open for public use. Number of new WPAs created.*
- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species *Number of acres of wetlands and uplands protected and restored.*

# Budget Spreadsheet

**Total Amount of Request: \$12,350,000**

## Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$120,000	\$600,000		\$720,000
Contracts	\$700,000	\$0		\$700,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$11,250,000	\$4,000,000	Federal Government, PF, Private	\$15,250,000
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$7,500	\$0		\$7,500
Professional Services	\$110,000	\$200,000	Federal Government	\$310,000
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$12,500	\$0		\$12,500
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,350,000</b>	<b>\$4,800,000</b>	-	<b>\$17,150,000</b>

## Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF Director of Conservation	0.11	3.00	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
PF Regional Staff	0.11	3.00	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
PF National Grants Staff	0.26	3.00	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
USFWS Realty Staff	0.00	3.00	\$0	\$200,000	Federal Government	\$200,000
USFWS Management Staff	0.00	3.00	\$0	\$400,000	Federal Government	\$400,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>15.00</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>	-	<b>\$720,000</b>

## 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	600	900	0	0	1,500
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	600	900	0	0	1,500

**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	\$4,940,000	\$7,410,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,350,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$4,940,000	\$7,410,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,350,000

**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	320	120	0	1,060	0	1,500
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	320	120	0	1,060	0	1,500

**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	\$4,000,000	\$800,000	\$0	\$7,550,000	\$0	\$12,350,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$4,000,000	\$800,000	\$0	\$7,550,000	\$0	\$12,350,000

**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

### Bigstone

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Bentson Lake WPA	122450207	75	\$300,000	No	Full	Full
Goldsmith WPA	122460201	117	\$475,000	No	Full	Full
Kufrin WPA Addition	122450221	120	\$600,000	No	Full	Full

### Blue Earth

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Lincoln WPA Addition	107290235	200	\$1,500,000	No	Full	Full

### Carver

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Perbix WPA Addition	115260234	160	\$1,520,000	No	Full	Full
Tiger Lake WPA	115260208	80	\$800,000	No	Full	Full

### Cottonwood

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Blixseth WPA Addition	105360233	150	\$1,125,000	No	Full	Full
Harder Lake WPA Addition	106360221	120	\$900,000	No	Full	Full
Harder Lake WPA Addition	106360216	80	\$600,000	No	Full	Full
Long Lake WPA Addition	106380227	160	\$1,200,000	No	Full	Full
New WPA	105360234	160	\$1,200,000	No	Full	Full
Watonwan River WPA Addition	106360210	198	\$1,485,000	No	Full	Full

## Faribault

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Maple River WPA Addition	104260210	100	\$750,000	No	Full	Full
New WPA	101280211	295	\$2,212,500	No	Full	Full
Pilot Grove WPA Addition	101280202	110	\$825,000	No	Full	Full

## Jackson

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
LaCrosse WPA Addition	104380216	140	\$1,050,000	No	Full	Full
New WPA	104380216	78	\$585,000	No	Full	Full
New WPA	104380216	160	\$1,200,000	No	Full	Full

## Kandiyohi

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Big Kandi WPA Addition	117340203	18	\$100,000	No	Full	Full

## Lac qui Parle

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Taylor WPA Addition	116460205	80	\$450,000	No	Full	Full

## Lincoln

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
New WPA	111460228	80	\$550,000	No	Full	Full
New WPA	109440228	135	\$850,000	No	Full	Full

## Lyon

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
New WPA	109410220	140	\$1,100,000	No	Full	Full

## McLeod

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Eagle Lake WPA Addition	106300231	80	\$600,000	No	Full	Full

## Pope

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Stenerson Lake WPA Addition	124380209	320	\$1,200,000	No	Full	Full

Sibley

<b>Name</b>	<b>TRDS</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Est Cost</b>	<b>Existing Protection?</b>	<b>Hunting?</b>	<b>Fishing?</b>
Mud Lake WPA Addition Tr. 3	114260221	120	\$1,020,000	No	Full	Full
Mud Lake WPA Addition Tr. 4	114260221	120	\$1,020,000	No	Full	Full

Yellow Medicine

<b>Name</b>	<b>TRDS</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Est Cost</b>	<b>Existing Protection?</b>	<b>Hunting?</b>	<b>Fishing?</b>
Dakota WPA Addition	115460204	163	\$950,000	No	Full	Full
Kontz WPA Addition	114460231	321	\$1,950,000	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.