

Request for Funding

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Fiscal Year 2016 / ML 2015

Program or Project Title: Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program - Phase 7

Funds Requested: \$16,528,000

Manager's Name: Joe Pavelko

Title: MN Director of Conservation Programs

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Organization Web Site: www.pheasantsforever.org

County Locations: Becker, Bigstone, Blue Earth, Carver, Cottonwood, Douglas, Faribault, Grant, Jackson, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, McLeod, Otter Tail, 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 2,000 acres of wetlands (500 acres) and grasslands (1,500 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. In the agricultural region of Minnesota over 90% of our wetlands and 99% of our prairie grasslands have been converted for other uses. Grant funding requested through this project will restore and permanently protect these lands for wildlife and the recreational enjoyment of the visiting public. 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 seventh phase of the acceleration program acquires AND restores 500 acres of wetland and 1,500 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.

How the request addresses MN habitats:

Grant funding will specifically focus on the acquisition and restoration of prairie wetland and grassland habitats previously converted for row crop agriculture. Once restored these wetland and grassland complexes will provide habitat for a myriad of species including mallards, black terns, bobolinks, meadowlarks, and the ring-necked pheasant. Other species of concern benefiting from this project include the prairie chicken, short-eared owl, marsh hawk, and yellow rails.

This project will focus on the restoration of prairie wetland and grassland habitats in western and southern Minnesota. These geographic areas of Minnesota are part of the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR), of North America. The PPR is well known for its waterfowl production potential and importance for grassland nesting birds. Recent studies have documented the conversion of grasslands have caused grassland nesting birds to be in a more severe long-term decline as compared to other groups of birds. The protection and restoration of wetland and grassland habitats will assist in reversing the decline of grassland nesting birds and stabilize waterfowl production in Minnesota.

Please explain the nature of urgency:

Wetland and grassland habitats in the PPR of Minnesota are still being converted for agricultural purposes. Those losses are not being off-set by existing State/Federal laws. This project will focus these resources in regions of the State that have sustained the greatest wetland and grassland losses.

Planning

MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Plans Addressed:

- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan

Please describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

The Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), located in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, provides landscape level planning tools used to identify the most important wetland and grassland habitats remaining in the PPR of Minnesota.

LSOHC Prairie Section Priorities:

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

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 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

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.

Non-OHF Money Spent in the Past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
Annual	PF	None

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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency that employs professional managers, biologists, field staff, 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 are targeted within areas that have existing USFWS ownership to reduce management and administrative costs. In addition, great care is given to the creation and acquisition of possible new Waterfowl Production Area outside existing ownership areas. It is not the intent of the partners to apply for management/maintenance funds for the acquired tracts in the future.

Maintain Project Outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Transfer	Federal	Monitoring	Maintenance	Habitat Management

Applicable Criteria:

If funded, this proposal will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056? - Yes

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.

Current Hunting and Fishing Plan:

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing? - **No**

Future Hunting and Fishing Plan:

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion? - **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	07/01/2015
Contract appraisals ordered	09/01/2015
Purchase agreements	02/01/2016
Re-evaluate tract priority	02/14/2016
Contract appraisals ordered	04/01/2016
Purchase agreements	07/01/2016
Close on tracts	01/01/2017
Restoration completed	06/30/2018

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.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting *Number and acres of wetlands protected and restored. Number of acquisitions that provide additional access to existing public lands.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species *Number of acres of wetlands and uplands protected and restored.*

Relationship to Other Funds:

- No Relationships Listed

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$16,528,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$135,000	\$0		\$135,000
Contracts	\$800,000	\$0	Federal, Private, PF	\$800,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$15,000,000	\$4,000,000	Federal, Private, PF (100k)	\$19,000,000
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
Professional Services	\$130,000	\$0		\$130,000
Direct Support Services	\$42,000	\$0		\$42,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$16,000	\$0		\$16,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$400,000	\$0		\$400,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$16,528,000	\$4,000,000	-	\$20,528,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MN Director of Conservation	0.12	3.00	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
MN Field Representatives	0.12	3.00	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
PF Grants Staff	0.30	3.00	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
Total	0.54	9.00	\$135,000	\$0	-	\$135,000

Amount of Request: \$16,528,000

Amount of Leverage: \$4,000,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 24.20%

Output Tables

Table 1a. 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	500	1,500	0	0	2,000
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	500	1,500	0	0	2,000

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	40
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	0
Total	40

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	\$4,132,500	\$12,395,500	\$0	\$0	\$16,528,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$4,132,500	\$12,395,500	\$0	\$0	\$16,528,000

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	100	600	0	1,300	0	2,000
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	600	0	1,300	0	2,000

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	\$826,500	\$4,959,000	\$0	\$10,742,500	\$0	\$16,528,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$826,500	\$4,959,000	\$0	\$10,742,500	\$0	\$16,528,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$8,265	\$8,264	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
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	\$8,265	\$8,265	\$0	\$8,263	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

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?
Lee Marshes WPA Addition	140420230	160	\$800,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Bigstone

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Goldsmith WPA	122460201	117	\$475,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Kufrin WPA Addition	122450221	120	\$600,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Blue Earth

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Lincoln WPA Addition	107290235	200	\$1,500,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Carver

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Perbix WPA Addition	115260234	160	\$1,520,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Cottonwood

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Harder Lake WPA Addition	106360216	80	\$600,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Harder Lake WPA Addition	106360221	120	\$900,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Long Lake WPA Addition	106380227	160	\$1,200,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Watonswan River WPA Addition	106360210	198	\$1,485,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Douglas

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Reger WPA Addition	130390206	80	\$320,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Faribault

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Maple River WPA Addition	104260210	100	\$750,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
New WPA	101280211	295	\$2,212,500	No	Full	Not Applicable
Pilot Grove WPA Addition	101280202	110	\$825,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Grant

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Pomme De Terre WPA Addition	130420236	39	\$234,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Jackson

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
New WPA	104380216	78	\$585,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
New WPA	104380216	160	\$1,200,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Sioux Forks WPA Addition	101360219	145	\$1,087,500	No	Full	Not Applicable
Skunk Creek WPA Addition	101370229	160	\$1,200,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Lac qui Parle

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Taylor WPA Addition	116460205	80	\$450,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Lincoln

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
New WPA	109440228	135	\$850,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
New WPA	111460228	80	\$550,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Lyon

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Bendix WPA Addition Tr. 2	109410221	121	\$907,500	No	Full	Not Applicable
New WPA	109410220	140	\$1,100,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Martin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Lake Belt WPA Addition Tr. 5	101320202	223	\$1,895,500	No	Full	Not Applicable

McLeod

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Barber Lake WPA Addition	116300227	120	\$900,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Otter Tail

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Pelican Valley WPA Addition Tr. 3	135430205	150	\$825,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Pope

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Stenerson Lake WPA Addition	124380209	320	\$1,200,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Sibley

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
High Island WPA Addition	114280218	80	\$600,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Mud Lake WPA Addition Tr. 6	114260221	120	\$1,020,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Yellow Medicine

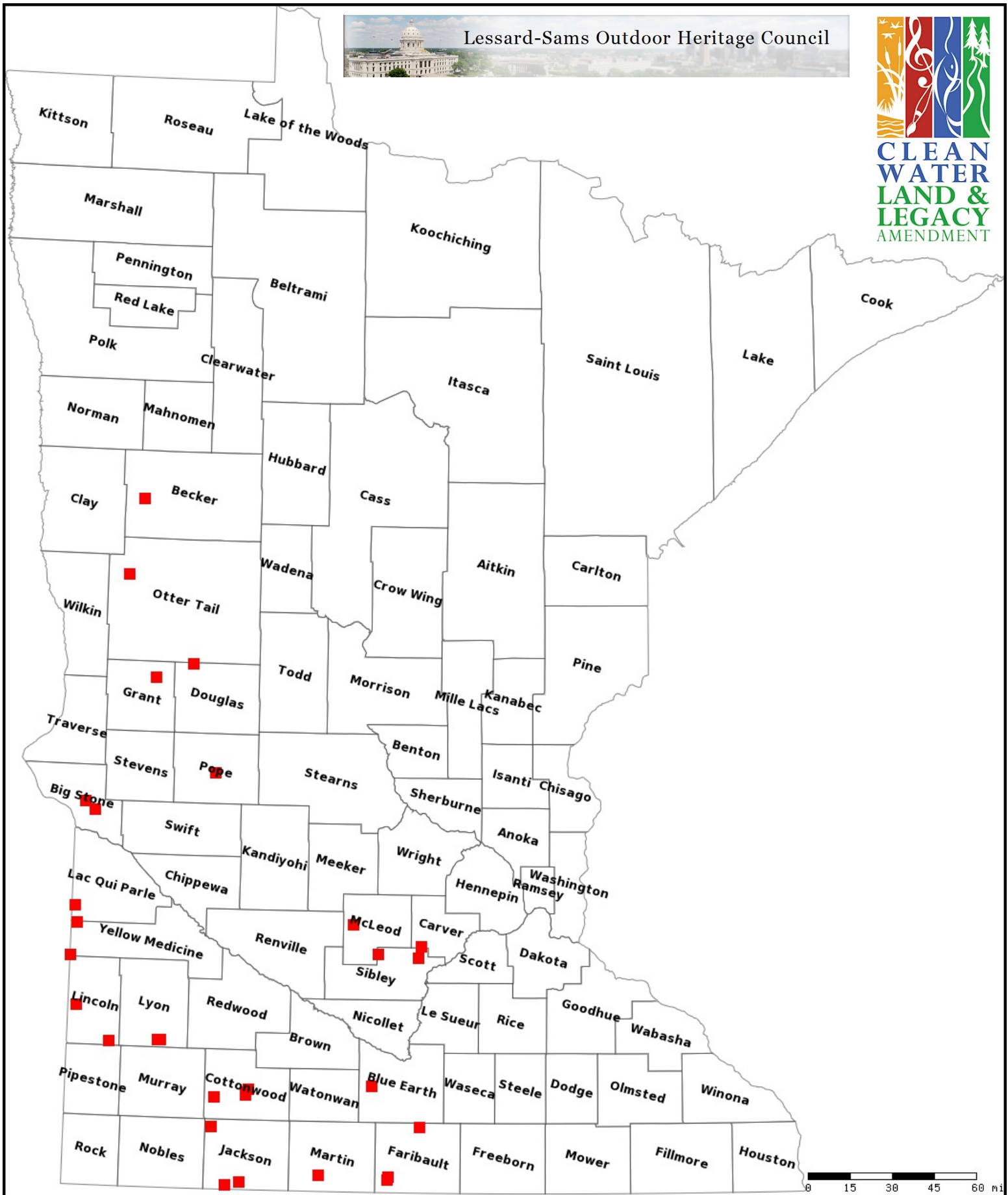
Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Dakota WPA Addition	115460204	163	\$950,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Kontz WPA Addition	114460231	321	\$1,950,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

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.



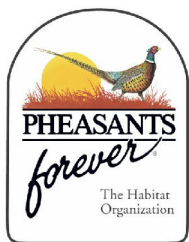
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Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program - Phase 7

Legend

- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- + Other

Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program - Phase 7



2,000 Acres Acquired AND Restored

