



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

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### Laws of Minnesota 2016 Final Report

#### General Information

**Date:** 08/10/2021

**Project Title:** Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership of the Southern Red River Valley Phase II

**Funds Recommended:** \$2,269,000

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2016, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(h)

**Appropriation Language:** \$2,269,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever, in cooperation with the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society, to acquire land in fee and restore and enhance lands in the southern Red River Valley for wildlife management purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8, or for designation and management as waterfowl production areas in Minnesota, in cooperation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquisition of lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

#### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Eran Sandquist

**Title:** State Coordinator - MN

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#### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Clay and Red Lake.

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Fee

#### **Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Prairie

## **Narrative**

### **Summary of Accomplishments**

The proposal was to accelerate the protection of 650 acres of prairie grassland, wetland, and other wildlife habitat as State Wildlife Management Areas or Waterfowl Production Areas in the Southern Red River Valley. Over the course of the appropriation, we acquired 74.14 acres of waterfowl production areas and 628.71 acres of wildlife management areas. These tracts were restored to provide the highest quality wildlife habitat possible.

### **Process & Methods**

Working in close collaboration with partners, Pheasants Forever acquired 702.85 acres of strategic habitat that directly meets the goals of the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. All land acquired has been enrolled into the state Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Program or the Waterfowl Production Area Program (WPA) and will be protected and managed in perpetuity by the Minnesota DNR or USFWS. These properties not only provide access and recreational opportunities for all Minnesotans, but also helps address a strong need to provide more secure nesting and brood rearing habitat for prairie chickens near existing leks.

The offer to the landowner was based on fair market value as indicated in an independent appraisal. The acquired parcel helps address a backlog of willing sellers which is now helping slow the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of habitat in Minnesota. Parcels were identified jointly with the MN DNR and USFWS, ranked, and prioritized on habitat goals and feasibility. Pheasants Forever and agency staff collaborated to generate a list of parcels with landowners who had the desire to sell. These parcels ecological impact was evaluated using landscape level planning tools such as the USFWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET), The MN Prairie Conservation Plan and The Pheasant Action Plan among other. By utilizing these tools, we were able to focus efforts in areas where acquisitions and restorations will make the greatest impact on the landscape and thus these additional acres of WMA are very beneficial to wildlife and public recreation.

Once acquired, wetlands on each parcel were restored by installing surface ditch “plugs” and or breaking subsurface tile. Some wetlands may also have had sediment removed to create proper substrates for wetland function and vegetative growth. Grasslands were restored by planting high-diversity native seed mix of grasses and forbs that are regionally appropriate to the area. As with all restoration work there are challenges that come from weather and working with private contractors, but we did not face any major issues.

### **How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?**

The majority of the acquisitions in this program add to existing WMA or WPA habitat complexes. Many of these complexes are the strongholds for many species of wildlife including SGCN and T/E species. By increasing the size and connectivity of these complexes many species are benefited. Additionally many of the parcels are located in the Prairie Pothole Region which is not only the richest wetland system on earth but also produces approximately onethird of the continents waterfowl population. The parcels acquired and restored as part of this phase add to the quantity and quality of grasslands and wetlands that are available to species such as mallards, black terns, bobolinks, meadowlarks, and the ring-necked pheasant. Additionally SGCN and T/E were considered when the parcels were evaluated for acquisition. Parcels with these species were ranked more favorably than parcels without. Species of concern that will benefit from these projects include the greater prairie chicken, short-eared owl, marsh hawk and yellow rail.

## How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

These potential additions to the WMA system are developed, reviewed, and selected in conjunction with the MN DNR and USFWS area managers and acquisition staff. Partners employ numerous planning and evaluation tools including the SWAAT scoring tool and USFWS HAPET modeling (thunderstorm maps) to identify quality habitat tracts that also meet recreational requirements. Additionally conservation plans such as the MN Prairie Conservation Plan and the Pheasant Action Plan, take corridors and complexes into account when creating focus areas. These focus areas are part of the evaluation process used to evaluate parcels for acquisition.

## Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

We worked closely with the MN DNR and USFWS to find and evaluate the best properties based on the criteria listed in the process and methods section. During the process, we also worked with many other partners to gauge interest levels and determine if the property is suitable for a WMA or WPA.

## Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

There were no exceptional failures or challenges that were encountered. This is due in part to our high level of collaboration and efficiency. We also strive to be respectful and accommodating in helping to facilitate landowners wishes when working with willing sellers as many see this as leaving their own habitat legacy.

## What other fund may contribute to this program?

- N/A

## What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All acquisition's in this appropriation have been transferred to the MN DNR or USFWS for enrollment into the Wildlife Management Area program or Waterfowl Production Area. Additionally all parcels have been fully restored. The long-term management and maintenance of these WMA's and WPA's will be the responsibility of the MN DNR or USFWS.

## Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2021 and forward	Federal/Local/PF Chapters	PF will continue to work with our partners and look for funds, where appropriate, to help maintain quality wildlife habitat on acquisitions.	-	-

## Budget

### Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$38,900	\$38,900	\$37,900	-	-	-	\$38,900	\$37,900
Contracts	\$201,600	\$386,600	\$247,200	-	\$12,000	Federal, Private, PF, MPCS	\$201,600	\$259,200
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,483,200	\$1,483,200	\$1,551,900	\$14,400	\$26,900	Federal, Private, PF, MPCS	\$1,497,600	\$1,578,800
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$460,800	\$275,800	\$206,800	\$14,400	\$10,000	Federal, Private, PF, MPCS	\$475,200	\$216,800
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$23,000	\$23,000	\$4,000	-	\$1,200	Federal, Private, PF, MPCS	\$23,000	\$5,200
Direct Support Services	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	-	-	-	\$10,000	\$10,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	-	-	-	\$12,000	\$12,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$39,500	\$39,500	\$38,200	-	-	-	\$39,500	\$38,200
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$2,269,000</b>	<b>\$2,269,000</b>	<b>\$2,108,000</b>	<b>\$28,800</b>	<b>\$50,100</b>	-	<b>\$2,297,800</b>	<b>\$2,158,100</b>

### Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF State Coordinator - MN	0.05	3.0	\$12,700	-	-	\$12,700
PF Field Staff	0.08	3.0	\$12,600	-	-	\$12,600
PF Grant Staff	0.06	3.0	\$12,600	-	-	\$12,600

### Direct Support Services

**How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?**

3% rate on \$303,000 (Personnel, Contracts, Professional Services, Supplies/Materials)

**Explain any budget challenges or successes:**

Pheasants Forever and our partners are happy to bring in over \$50,000 of non-state match dollars to this effort. While coming in under budget we were able to buy more acres than our original proposal. This demonstrates the efficiency of Pheasants Forever as the economical provider for building habitat complex. No challenges were encountered and PF achieved and exceeded all outlined goals within the budget.

**Total Revenue:** \$6,550

**Revenue Spent:** \$3,446

**Revenue Balance:** \$3,104

**Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:**

- C. This revenue, or a portion of it, was transferred back to the OHF.
- B. This revenue, or a portion of it, was used for other purposes as approved in the AP by the LSOHC.

## Output Tables

### Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	500	629	0	0	0	0	500	629
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	150	74	0	0	0	0	150	74
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>703</b>

### Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$1,741,500	\$1,851,600	-	-	-	-	\$1,741,500	\$1,851,600
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	\$527,500	\$256,400	-	-	-	-	\$527,500	\$256,400
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,269,000</b>	<b>\$2,108,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,269,000</b>	<b>\$2,108,000</b>

### Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	65	324	0	0	435	305	0	0	500	629
Protect in Fee w/o	0	0	0	0	0	0	150	74	0	0	150	74

State PILT Liability												
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>703</b>

### Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$227,800	\$967,300	-	-	\$1,513,700	\$884,300	-	-	\$1,741,500	\$1,851,600
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$527,500	\$256,400	-	-	\$527,500	\$256,400
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	<b>\$227,800</b>	<b>\$967,300</b>	-	-	<b>\$2,041,200</b>	<b>\$1,140,700</b>	-	-	<b>\$2,269,000</b>	<b>\$2,108,000</b>

### Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

## 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 ~ *We acquired one tract in the Forest-Prairie transition zone totaling 323.83 acres. Wetland and upland restorations were completed to create nesting habitat for breeding waterfowl, upland and other grassland birds, and stopover habitat for migrating species.*

### Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Three parcels totaling 379.02 acres were purchased in the prairie region. These acres were restored to the highest extent possible to benefit migratory and unique Minnesota species.*

## Parcels

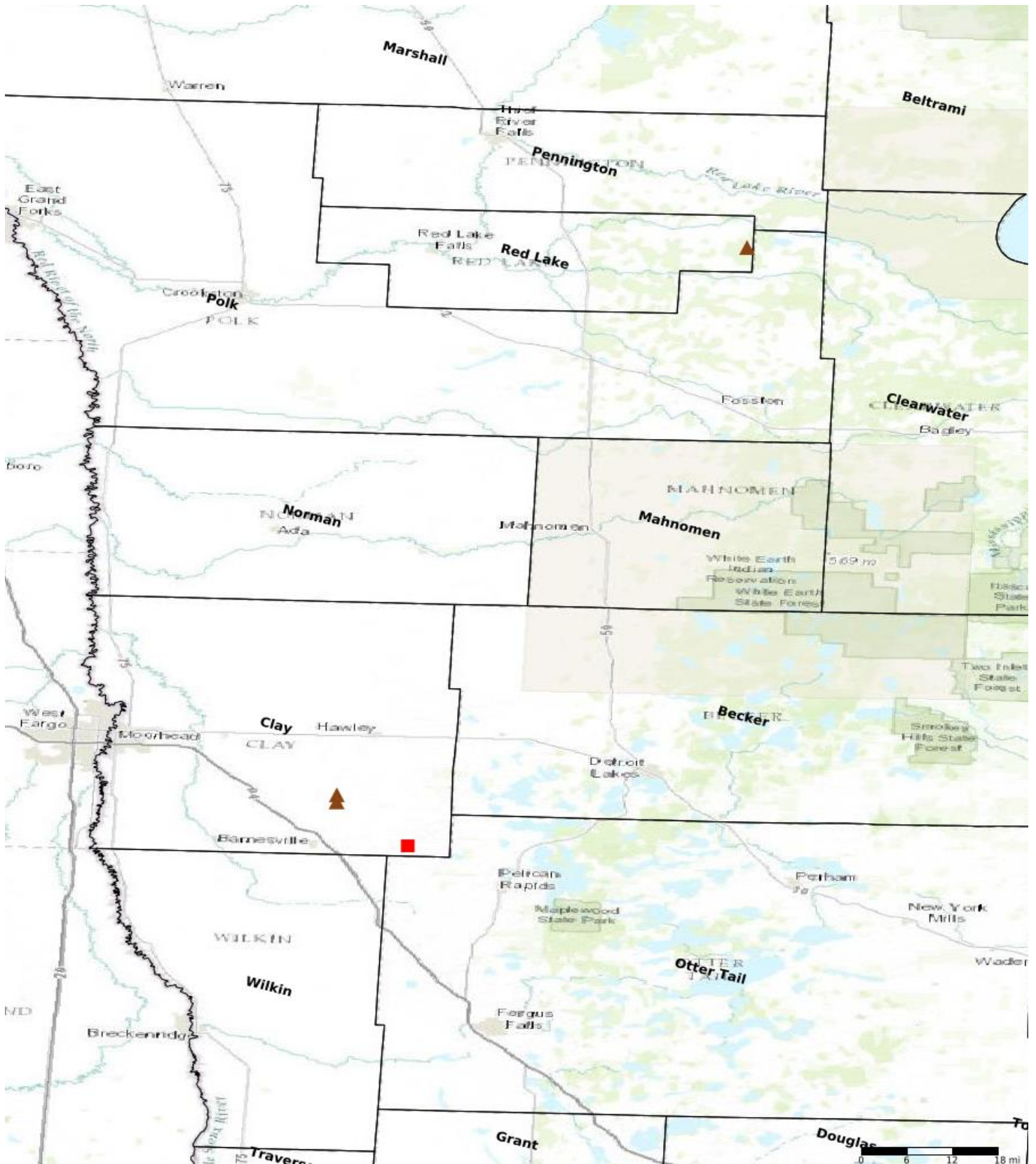
### Sign-up Criteria?

No

### Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Haugtvedt WPA addition	Clay	13744228	74	\$250,000	No
Clay County WMA addition	Clay	13845228	155	\$496,000	No
Clay County WMA addition	Clay	13845221	150	\$495,000	No
Crane WMA addition	Red Lake	15140213	324	\$340,000	No





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

**Parcel Map**  
**Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership of the**  
**Southern Red River Valley Phase II**  
**(Data Generated From Parcel List)**