



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership of the Southern Red River Valley - Phase III  
Laws of Minnesota 2017 Final Report

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### General Information

**Date:** 09/01/2022

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

**Funds Recommended:** \$1,908,000

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2017, Ch. 91, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(h)

**Appropriation Language:** \$1,908,000 in the first 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 86A.05, subdivision 8 or to be designated and managed as waterfowl production areas in Minnesota, in cooperation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquisitions 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

**Organization:** MN Prairie Chicken Society / Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Clay and Norman.

**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

Phase 3 of the PCHP sought to acquire parcels as State Wildlife Management Areas or Waterfowl Production Areas in the Southern Red River Valley. Over the course of the appropriation, we acquired one 64.1 acre tract as a waterfowl production area and two tracts totaling 555.7 acres as wildlife management areas. Upland prairie and wetland habitat were restored on all tracts to provide the highest quality wildlife habitat possible.

### Process & Methods

Working in close collaboration with the MN Prairie Chicken Society, Pheasants Forever acquired 619.85 acres of strategic habitat that will benefit Greater Prairie Chicken populations in MN. All land acquired have 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.

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.

Offers to landowners were based on fair market value as indicated in an independent appraisal. Once acquired, drained 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?**

SGCN and T/E were considered when the parcels were evaluated for acquisition. Parcels with identified 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. Additionally the acquisitions in this program add to existing WMA or WPA habitat complexes. Many of these complexes are the strongholds for 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 one third 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.

## 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.

Each potential acquisition tract was 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 DNR SWAAT scoring tool and USFWS HAPET modeling (breeding duck density 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

Pheasants Forever and the MN Prairie Chicken Society 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. As with any acquisition program there is occasional opposition, however during the acquisition of the tracts in this phase no significant issues occurred.

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

There were no exceptional failures or challenges that were encountered. This program continues to build upon some of the best remaining prairie habitat complexes in MN. The most unique aspect, in comparison to other parts of the state, is being able to directly benefit an existing population of greater prairie chickens.

## 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
2022 and future years	Federal/Local grant sources/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
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,207,200	\$1,190,200	\$1,061,600	\$11,700	\$160,000	Federal, Private, PF, MPCS	\$1,218,900	\$1,221,600
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$375,000	\$252,200	\$240,800	\$11,700	-	Federal, Private, PF, MPCS	\$386,700	\$240,800
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$700	\$1,500	\$600	-	-	-	\$700	\$600
Professional Services	\$49,500	\$49,500	\$44,700	-	\$1,800	Federal, Private, PF, MPCS	\$49,500	\$46,500
Direct Support Services	\$4,600	\$4,600	\$4,500	-	-	-	\$4,600	\$4,500
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$21,100	\$21,100	\$21,100	-	-	-	\$21,100	\$21,100
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	\$2,000	\$400	-	-	-	-	\$400
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Personnel	\$15,300	\$27,300	\$25,900	-	-	-	\$15,300	\$25,900
Contracts	\$234,600	\$359,600	\$219,900	-	-	-	\$234,600	\$219,900
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,908,000</b>	<b>\$1,908,000</b>	<b>\$1,619,500</b>	<b>\$23,400</b>	<b>\$161,800</b>	-	<b>\$1,931,400</b>	<b>\$1,781,300</b>

### Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF State Coordinator - MN	0.02	3.0	\$4,500	-	-	\$4,500
PF Field Staff	0.03	3.0	\$15,800	-	-	\$15,800
PF Grants Staff	0.03	3.0	\$5,600	-	-	\$5,600

#### Explain any budget challenges or successes:

This partnership was successful in bringing in \$161,800 of non-state match 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/MPCS achieved and exceeded all outlined goals within the budget.

**Total Revenue:** \$14,079

**Revenue Spent:** \$14,079

**Revenue Balance:** \$0

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

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

#### Itemize out how the revenues were spent:

Vacant land insurance- Gruhl WMA- \$910.30

Vacant land insurance- Twin Valley WMA- \$2,251.42

Twin Valley tract taxes- \$3,892  
Lofgren Tract taxes- \$3,288  
Lofgren Wetland Resto- \$3,737.28

## 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	448	555	0	0	0	0	448	555
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	138	64	0	0	0	0	138	64
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>586</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>619</b>

### How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie? (Table 1b)

Type	Native Prairie (AP)	Native Prairie (Final)
Restore	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	18	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0
Enhance	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</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	-	-	\$1,458,600	\$1,452,000	-	-	-	-	\$1,458,600	\$1,452,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	\$449,400	\$167,500	-	-	-	-	\$449,400	\$167,500
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,908,000</b>	<b>\$1,619,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,908,000</b>	<b>\$1,619,500</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	47	0	0	0	401	555	0	0	448	555
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	138	64	0	0	138	64
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>47</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>619</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	-	-	\$153,000	-	-	-	\$1,305,600	\$1,452,000	-	-	\$1,458,600	\$1,452,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$449,400	\$167,500	-	-	\$449,400	\$167,500
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$153,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,755,000</b>	<b>\$1,619,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,908,000</b>	<b>\$1,619,500</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 did not acquire any parcels in the forest-prairie transition region.*

### Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Three parcels totaling 619.89 acres were purchased in the prairie region. These acres were restored to the highest extent possible to benefit migratory and unique Minnesota species.*



## Parcels

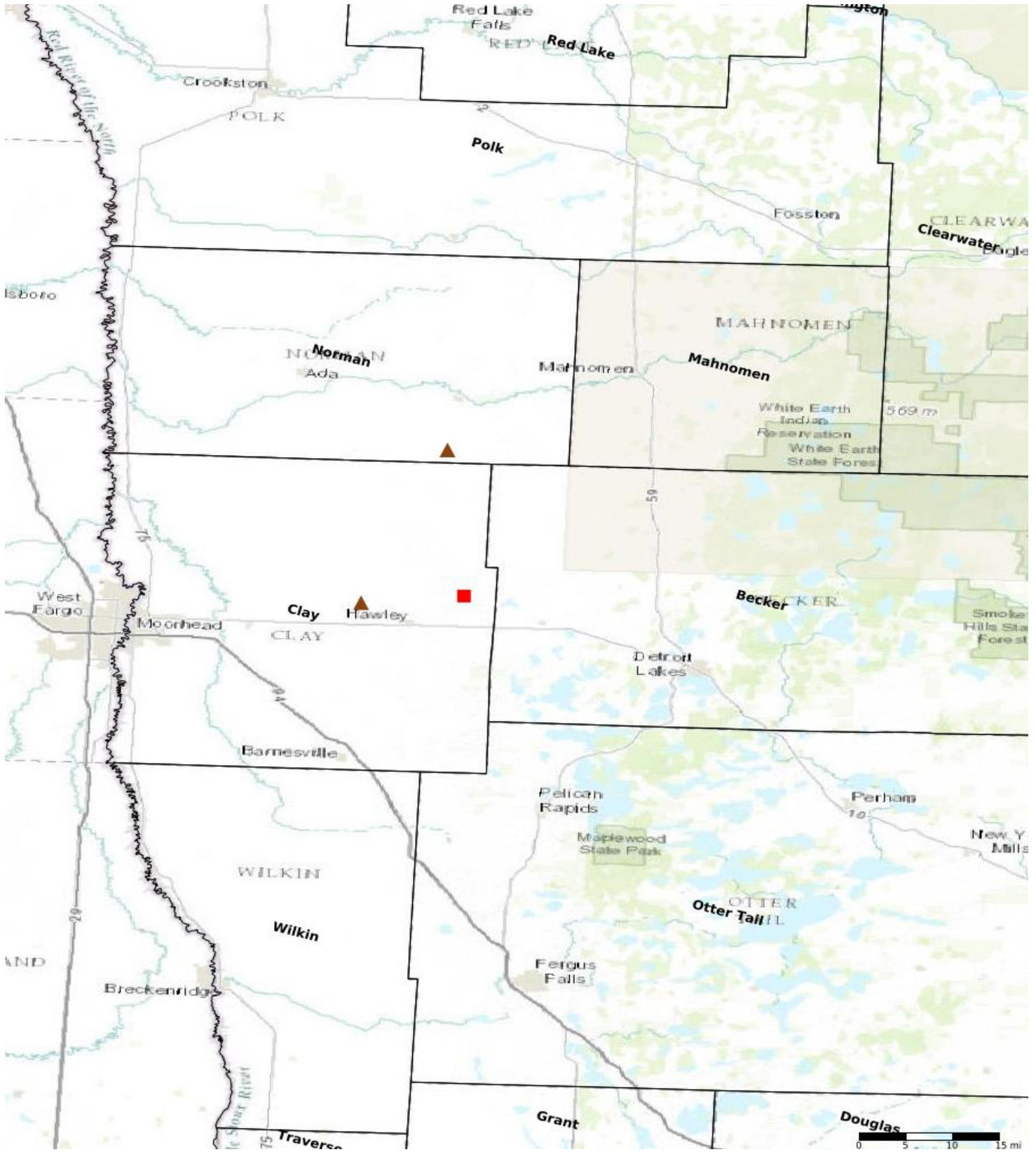
### Sign-up Criteria?

No

### Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Lofgren WPA addition	Clay	14044222	64	\$239,000	No
Gruhl WMA	Clay	14045229	160	\$304,000	No
Twin Valley WMA addition, Tract 6	Norman	14344228	396	\$752,000	No

# Parcel Map



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