

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2019 / ML 2018 Request for Funding



Date: May 31, 2017

Program or Project Title: Accelerating the USFWS Habitat Conservation Easement Program - Phase I

Funds Requested: \$12,570,000

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County Locations: Not Listed

Regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

Abstract:

This Phase 1 partnership will accelerate USFWS wildlife habitat easements to restore and protect 3,000 acres of private grasslands and pothole wetlands in west-central Minnesota. These "working land" conservation easements allow delayed haying and grazing while protecting restored wetlands and prairie grasslands for nesting ducks, pheasants, and other wildlife. By restoring and protecting grassland and wetland habitat that also allows for continued landowner use of these working private lands, USFWS habitat easements fill an important prairie landscape conservation niche that complements other more restrictive easements and fee-title public lands, and adds grassland to buffer rare intact native prairie nearby.

Design and scope of work:

Ducks Unlimited (DU) and Pheasants Forever (PF) will purchase wildlife habitat conservation easements on private land in west-central Minnesota using federally-approved conservation easement language and payment rates, restore drained wetlands and cropland back to prairie grassland, and transfer the easements to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) for long-term perpetual monitoring and enforcement. DU will purchase and hold easements through its Wetlands America Trust (WAT), DU's supporting land-holding fiduciary organization, of which DU is the sole corporate member. By purchasing easements and restoring grasslands and wetlands for USFWS with OHF support, DU and PF will effectively accelerate the rate at which USFWS can protect grassland and wetlands in key focus landscapes in which there are also many state and federal wildlife lands owned and managed in fee-title, and other lands protected by more restrictive conservation easements too. These are some of the most productive landscapes in the state for breeding waterfowl and other prairie wildlife including pheasants, and these private working land conservation easements complement other federal, state, and private conservation easement options presented to landowners.

USFWS habitat conservation easements not only include protection measures that prevent wetland and prairie conversion (along with land development and subdivision), but importantly, they also secure rights to restore wetlands and prairie grassland where feasible too - which is the primary purpose of this easement program funding request. DU/PF will rely on referrals and prioritization of parcels

from USFWS, and will offer federally-approved easement payments, but will perform all other landowner negotiations, boundary survey, phase 1 environmental review, title review, and other legal tasks, and purchase the easement for USFWS. DU and PF will restore prairie and wetlands on lands eased using the same state OHF grant funds used to purchase easements as required by the LSOHC. DU/PF will also pay for the restoration of eased lands too in partnership with the USFWS, and with technical guidance from their private lands biologists. DU engineers will survey/design larger wetland restorations, and manage construction by private firms.

USFWS "Habitat Easements" have been used here for over two decades, and are designed to provide a habitat protection conservation tool to complement public lands habitat complexes such as federal Waterfowl Production Areas and state Wildlife Management Areas, by keeping privately owned restored grassland and wetland habitat intact and on county tax rolls while allowing for working use of the land. These easements provide landowners with the option of either delayed haying (after July 15) or both grazing and delayed haying, which results in adequate habitat for wetland and upland nesting birds and a working land use option that appeals to some private landowners. Importantly, these working land easements also help manage plant succession on their land, which is critical to preventing the encroachment of volunteer trees and invasive plant species. Well-managed grazing, delayed haying, and USFWS prescribed fire also benefits those grassland bird species that prefer more open prairie habitats, such as pintail ducks, marbled godwits, snipe, and many other prairie species.

Which sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are applicable to this project:

- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- U.S. Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Plan

Describe how your program will advance the indicators identified in the plans selected:

The goal of these conservation plans is to restore and protect prairie grasslands and wetlands in landscapes with existing prairie-wetland habitat complexes, which USFWS habitat conservation easements are designed to accomplish. Breeding ducks and pheasants require prairie-wetland complexes containing at least 20% upland nesting cover and small wetlands. Restoring and protecting viable patches of grassland with small wetlands around existing patches of habitat will create functioning prairie-wetland habitat complexes. By focusing our efforts to restore and protect grasslands and wetlands in close proximity to existing federal WPAs and state WMAs, and other private lands under restrictive conservation easements, these new USFWS habitat easements will increase the amount of permanently protected grassland and wetland habitat in close proximity to prairie-wetland habitat complexes that will directly benefit breeding migratory birds, pollinators, and resident wildlife species.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Prairie:

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

Forest / Prairie Transition:

- 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

Metro / Urban:

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Describe how your program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife as indicated in the LSOHC priorities:

This program will permanently protect grasslands with wetlands adjacent to existing state WMAs, federal WPAs, and other easement lands with permanent protection to increase their patch size and functional viability as habitat for prairie wildlife. The goal of this work is to create permanently protected and functioning prairie-wetland complexes for breeding and migrating waterfowl and other prairie wildlife species. Therefore, our work will result in a significant and permanent conservation legacy for the public, and in the long-term will result in improved and viable functioning habitat patches and complexes for both wildlife and people alike. By allowing for grazing and delayed haying land use, these permanently protected "working lands" habitat easements produce conservation legacy that

complements other publically-funded conservation easements and public lands.

The critical conservation need in Minnesota's prairie region is more prairie grasslands and wetlands in landscapes with existing patches of prairie-wetland habitat. Breeding ducks and pheasants require prairie-wetland complexes containing at least 20% upland nesting cover and small wetlands. Restoring and protecting viable patches of grassland with small wetlands around existing patches of habitat will create functioning prairie-wetland habitat complexes. By focusing our efforts to restore and protect grasslands and wetlands in close proximity to existing federal WPAs and state WMAs, and other private lands under restrictive conservation easements, USFWS habitat easements on working private lands will increase the amount of permanently protected grassland and wetland habitat in close proximity to prairie-wetland habitat complexes that will directly benefit breeding migratory birds, pollinators, and resident wildlife species.

Describe how the proposal uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

USFWS biologists score and rank each grassland habitat easement proposal based on ecological site attributes and landscape juxtaposition. This ranking process was designed to be relatively simple and evaluate the capability of the proposed easement to provide biological benefits for wetland and grassland dependent wildlife species by considering the habitat on the easement tract as well as its contribution and benefits to other protected lands in the surrounding area. Periodically, the USFWS Minnesota Wetland Acquisition Office in Fergus Falls uses these rankings to re-prioritize the proposals to assure that the USFWS is working on and purchasing the highest ranking proposals throughout the year. DU and PF will rely on the high level of science-based expertise of the USFWS to ensure that easement opportunities are prioritized, and will work closely as a partnership to share the workload and accelerate the easement program in west-central Minnesota. Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, and USFWS will work together to use science-based targeting to focus promotion of this accelerated habitat conservation easement program, with focus on tracts near existing federal WPAs, state WMAs, and other permanent private land easements. High priority tracts will be those with restorable drained wetlands and converted prairie or expiring CRP that, once fully restored, will build and expand prairie-wetland complexes for ducks, pheasants, and migratory birds in landscapes with a high density of other protected habitats. Science-based models such as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) "Thunderstorm Maps" and "Restorable Wetlands Inventory" will help us determine landscape importance to breeding waterfowl, as will the state Pheasant Plan and Minnesota's Prairie Conservation Plan that helps guide prairie conservation efforts within Complexes, Core, and Corridor areas of western Minnesota. Finally, parcels near sites with relatively high biological diversity and significance based on the Minnesota DNR County Biological Survey (MCBS) will be a priority too, and parcels with unique ecological values will be shared with other conservation easement program partners to ensure collaboration, avoid duplication of effort, and that the best conservation easement program option is offered to private landowners.

How does the proposal address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species:

This proposal will use habitat easements to restore to prairie grasslands and wetland complexes. USFWS easements can be grazed and delay hayed, land uses which are compatible with grassland nesting birds as per scientific research. Prairies and emergent marshes are identified as critical habitats for many "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" listed in Minnesota's "Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild & Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife". Grassland nesting birds have shown the largest population decline of any of the bird species. Specific species listed in the Action Plan as requiring prairie (page 255) include seven species of butterflies and three bird species that are native prairie specialists: chestnut-collared longspur, Sprague's pipit, and Baird's sparrow. Specific species listed in the Action Plan as requiring emergent marshes (page 267) include least bittern, American bittern, marsh wren, and Virginia rail. The Prairie Parkland has 139 species listed on the SGCN with 13 of these species being unique to the section. Grasslands are also critical to a diverse suite of declining pollinator species.

In addition to these specific wildlife species listed as SGCN in the Action Plan, restored prairie and wetlands in the Prairie Parkland will provide habitat of significant value for other species listed in Appendix B of the Action Plan too. Restored and protected prairie will provide habitat of significant value for other SGCN including bird species: upland sandpiper, bobolink, burrowing owl, le conte's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, eastern meadowlark, swamp sparrow, sharp-tailed grouse, short-eared owl, northern harrier, dickcissel, Henslow's sparrow, and Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow. Upland nesting waterfowl will also benefit including waterfowl listed as SGCN; northern pintail and lesser scaup, which have both seen declines in continental populations. Wetland associated birds such as trumpeter swan, black tern, American bittern, Wilson's phalarope, and marbled godwit will benefit from wetlands restored and buffered in the prairie landscape through the habitat easements. Mammals including northern grasshopper mouse and Richardson's ground squirrels, reptiles such as lined snake and Blanding's turtle, and amphibians such as northern cricket frog and common mudpuppy are SGCN in the Prairie Parkland.

Identify indicator species and associated quantities this habitat will typically support:

Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever propose to acquire and restore USFWS Habitat Easements on 3,000 acres of prairie grassland and wetlands, with an estimated ratio of at least 20% prairie pothole wetlands 80% grass uplands, near existing federal WPAs and state WMAs to improve their function as prairie-wetland habitat complexes for waterfowl and many other prairie and wetland-dependent

wildlife species. Science-based guidance provided by Minnesota DNR suggests that 600 acres of wetlands and 2,400 acres of prairie uplands are estimated to:

Support approximately 243 pairs of breeding mallards based on the biological model of the Upper Mississippi River Great Lakes Joint Venture of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan that indicates one pair of mallards needs 2.47 acres of wetlands with adequate adjacent upland nesting habitat to support population growth;

Support at least 4 or more pairs of trumpeter swans assuming one pair for every 150 wetland acres, depending on the size, type, and number of wetland basins restored or enhanced;

Support up to 1,412 pairs of bobolinks and 1,143 pairs of grasshopper sparrows, based on guidance that breeding territory size of bobolinks and grasshopper sparrows is 1.7 and 2.1 acres, respectively, in high quality habitat in Wisconsin;

Produce approximately 800 harvested rooster pheasants based on ratios of CRP acres to pheasant harvest in Minnesota, and possible prairie chicken habitat too;

Contribute 7,200 to 19,200 monarch butterflies to the overwintering population, assuming 100-250 stems of milkweed plants per prairie acre restored.

Outcomes:

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Wetland and upland complexes will consist of native prairies, restored prairies, quality grasslands, and restored shallow lakes and wetlands *USFWS habitat easements will add restored and protected grassland and small wetland acres to augment existing public lands and other permanent easements to create prairie-wetland complexes with a more diverse mix of habitats and conservation options for private landowners. The measure of success will be the number of functioning prairie wetland complexes that provide adequate wetland and grassland acres within a landscape. This is a long-term, programmatic landscape conservation effort that will take time to achieve.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna *USFWS conservation easements will complement existing land protection options to help keep prairie grasslands with small wetlands on the landscape to buffer core areas of native prairie and oak savanna, thereby increasing the diversity of wetlands and plant communities and giving private landowners a working lands conservation option from which to choose, including lands under soon to expire CRP contracts. Wetlands and grasslands that are grazed will have an improved functional wildlife habitat benefit due to periodic disturbance of large animals, and is very compatible with oak savanna habitats.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Expiring CRP lands are permanently protected *This outcome will be measured by the sheer number of expiring CRP acres that will be protected through USFWS easements, and the protected grassland and wetland habitat that will not be subject to future conversion to intensive row crop agriculture. By offering private landowners a working lands conservation easement option, landowners in need of an annual income stream from their land will be incentivized to keep grasslands intact and restore wetlands.*

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended:

Easements secured will be transferred to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for long-term annual monitoring and enforcement. The terms of the easement require wetlands and grasslands to be maintained by the private landowner, and allow for the the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to help enhance wetland restorations or improve grassland stand when determined by the Service to be necessary.

Explain the things you will do in the future to maintain project outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2020	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Annually Monitor Easements	Identify Problems, if any	Work with Private Landowners to Resolve

What is the degree of timing/opportunistic urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible:

USFWS currently has a backlog of approximately 50 landowners with over 3,000 acres who are very interested in protecting their grasslands and wetlands with USFWS habitat conservation easements. Increased interest will result from active easement promotion if state funding is provided to DU and PF, especially with many CRP contracts now expiring.

Timing is critical for many landowners with expiring CRP contracts, business decisions related to expanding livestock operations, and sometimes estate planning or other family decisions. When USFWS is not able to move forward quickly enough, landowners may choose less ecologically desirable uses for their land that often include putting land back into row crop production, especially in the case of expiring CRP. Often, landowners cannot afford to forego annual income after CRP contracts expire, and without other options, are forced to return land to row crop production, even when doing so is not their preference.

How does this proposal include leverage in funds or other effort to supplement any OHF appropriation:

DU and PF strive to use our non-federal private and state OHF grant expense as often as possible as match to leverage federal NAWCA grant funds to further our conservation missions. NAWCA is highly competitive and complex, and proposal success is uncertain. Therefore, DU and PF will work closely with Minnesota DNR, USFWS, and other NGO partners such as TNC to use state OHF grant expense as non-federal match to leverage federal NAWCA funds to help fund similar land restoration and protection work in the same landscapes where USFWS habitat conservation easements are being purchased and restored. This approach may include using OHF grant expense to leverage NAWCA funds to pay for more habitat easements, or to purchase lands in fee-title for DNR or FWS, or for restoration costs of lands purchased or protected by easements.

Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

Describe the relationship of the funds:

Not Listed

Describe the source and amount of non-OHF money spent for this work in the past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2010-2016	U.S. Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (federal Duck Stamp)	Over \$3million

Activity Details

Requirements:

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

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

Some tracts to be eased may already have USFWS wetland easements on them that protect intact and restored wetlands. The federal payment for these new habitat easements will take into account the value of the land with those wetlands permanently protected. These new USFWS Habitat easements will overlay, and protect and restore uplands in addition to previously protected wetlands.

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **Yes**

Are the funds confirmed - **Yes**

Documentation

What are the types of funds?

Cash Match - \$1000000

In-Kind Match - \$250000

Land Use:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **Yes**

Explain

Some very limited duration crop planting may be required as site preparation for prairie restoration on parcels where herbicides with long (18+ month) residual carryover have been used, where conversion of old fields infested with invasive plants such as

smooth brome and reed canary grass require a year of cropping with herbicides, or for other restoration purpose. No food plots are planned through this program.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated - **Yes**

Will the eased land be open for public use - **No**

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the acquisitions on the parcel list - **No**

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition - **No**

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Easement offers made to private landowners for parcels prioritized by USFWS and using payments calculated by USFWS	June 2019
Easement boundary surveys, consulted phase 1 environmental reviews, and legal title clearance completed by DU and PF	December 2019
Easements purchased and recorded by DU and PF	December 2020
Easements transferred from DU and PF to USFWS	December 2021
Easement wetlands and prairie grasslands restored by DU and PF	December 2022

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$12,570,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$440,000	\$250,000	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	\$690,000
Contracts	\$2,400,000	\$0		\$2,400,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$9,000,000	\$1,000,000	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	\$10,000,000
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
Professional Services	\$300,000	\$0		\$300,000
Direct Support Services	\$55,000	\$0		\$55,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
Supplies/Materials	\$300,000	\$0		\$300,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$12,570,000	\$1,250,000		\$13,820,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Ducks Unlimited Biologists, Land Specialist, and Wetland Engineers	1.33	3.00	\$400,000	\$250,000	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	\$650,000
Pheasants Forever Biologist, Land, and Legal Staff	0.13	3.00	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
Total	1.46	6.00	\$440,000	\$250,000		-\$690,000

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Ducks Unlimited	\$400,000	\$250,000	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	\$650,000
Contracts	Ducks Unlimited	\$1,600,000	\$0		\$1,600,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Ducks Unlimited	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Ducks Unlimited	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	Ducks Unlimited	\$6,000,000	\$1,000,000	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	\$7,000,000
Easement Stewardship	Ducks Unlimited	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	Ducks Unlimited	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
Professional Services	Ducks Unlimited	\$200,000	\$0		\$200,000
Direct Support Services	Ducks Unlimited	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Ducks Unlimited	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	Ducks Unlimited	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Ducks Unlimited	\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000
Supplies/Materials	Ducks Unlimited	\$200,000	\$0		\$200,000
DNR IDP	Ducks Unlimited	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$8,500,000	\$1,250,000		-\$9,750,000

Personnel - Ducks Unlimited

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Ducks Unlimited Biologists, Land Specialist, and Wetland Engineers	1.33	3.00	\$400,000	\$250,000	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	\$650,000
Total	1.33	3.00	\$400,000	\$250,000		-\$650,000

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Pheasants Forever	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
Contracts	Pheasants Forever	\$800,000	\$0		\$800,000

Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0	\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0	\$0
Easement Acquisition	Pheasants Forever	\$3,000,000	\$0	\$3,000,000
Easement Stewardship	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	Pheasants Forever	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000
Professional Services	Pheasants Forever	\$100,000	\$0	\$100,000
Direct Support Services	Pheasants Forever	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0	\$0
Capital Equipment	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Pheasants Forever	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
Supplies/Materials	Pheasants Forever	\$100,000	\$0	\$100,000
DNR IDP	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total		\$4,070,000	\$0	\$4,070,000

Personnel - Pheasants Forever

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Pheasants Forever Biologist, Land, and Legal Staff	0.13	3.00	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
Total	0.13	3.00	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000

Amount of Request: \$12,570,000
Amount of Leverage: \$1,250,000
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 9.94%
DSS + Personnel: \$495,000
As a % of the total request: 3.94%
Easement Stewardship: \$0
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -%

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

Minnesota DNR grants staff previously reviewed and approved DU accounting methodology for Direct Support Services, which are calculated and included in DU staff costs. DU Direct Support Services constitute approximately 10% of DU overall staff costs on average among DU conservation staff billing categories. DU breaks out and invoices for Direct Support Service expenses approved by DNR for reimbursement separately from Personnel expenses. In accordance with 2 CFR 200, DU uses the direct allocation method of allocating costs to programs and final cost objectives. This process of allocating costs is accomplished through the use of hourly rates. The direct cost of activities, including direct support expenses, is included in these hourly rates. The rates are comprised of costs for salaries, benefits, office space, general insurance, support staff, office supplies, and other various direct expenses incurred at the regional offices and conservation department at the home office. All costs are assigned to conservation projects (net of applicable personnel and other costs that are non-conservation related.) Hourly charges represent the amount that DU charges conservation projects per hour for each staff member working on the project. These costs represent expenses that directly support the labor cost necessary for the development of a specific water/wetlands conservation project.

PF utilizes the Total Modified Direct Cost method. This methodology is annually approved by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Business Center as the basis for the organization's Indirect Cost Rate agreement. PF's allowable direct support services cost is 4.12%. In this proposal, PF has discounted its rate to 1.5% of the sum of personnel, contracts, professional services, and travel, and will donate the difference in-kind.

Does the amount in the contract line include R/E work?

Yes, all of the Contracts line item is for prairie and wetland restoration work contracted to private sector firms and individuals, and includes activities such as field site preparation, tree removal, prairie grass seeding, ditch plugging, tile disruption, sediment removal, dike and berm construction, water control structure installation, and wetland vegetation restoration.

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental? - No

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging:

None - all travel funding will be used for in-state mileage, meals, and lodging, as necessary.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will spend \$1,000,000 or more of federal funds appropriated from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to purchase additional conservation easements, and will provide at least \$250,000 of federal USFWS staff cost to assist the purchase, restoration, and transfer of easements.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable? - Yes

Tell us how this project would be scaled and how administrative costs are affected, describe the “economy of scale” and how outputs would change with reduced funding, if applicable:

This program will be scaled proportionately to the level of funding recommended in terms of both expense and outputs, with some base level of personnel funding maintained to manage required administration.

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	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	600	2,400	0	0	3,000
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	600	2,400	0	0	3,000

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	0
Protect in Easement	30
Enhance	0
Total	30

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	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$2,514,000	\$10,056,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,570,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$2,514,000	\$10,056,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,570,000

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	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	300	600	0	2,100	0	3,000
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	300	600	0	2,100	0	3,000

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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$1,257,000	\$2,514,000	\$0	\$8,799,000	\$0	\$12,570,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$1,257,000	\$2,514,000	\$0	\$8,799,000	\$0	\$12,570,000

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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$4,190	\$4,190	\$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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$4,190	\$4,190	\$0	\$4,190	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

I have read and understand Section 15 of the Constitution of the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Statute 97A.056, and the Call for Funding Request. I certify I am authorized to submit this proposal and to the best of my knowledge the information provided is true and accurate.

Parcel List

Explain the process used to select, rank and prioritize the parcels:

USFWS biologists score and rank each grassland habitat easement proposal based on ecological site attributes and landscape juxtaposition. This ranking process was designed to be relatively simple and evaluate the capability of the proposed easement to provide biological benefits for wetland and grassland dependent wildlife species by considering the habitat on the easement tract as well as its contribution and benefits to other protected lands in the surrounding area. Periodically through out the year, the USFWS Minnesota Wetland Acquisition Office in Fergus Falls uses these rankings to re-prioritize the proposals to assure that the USFWS is working on and purchasing the highest ranking proposals throughout the year. DU and PF will rely on the high level of science-based conservation expertise of the USFWS to ensure that easement opportunities are prioritized appropriately.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type protect.

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

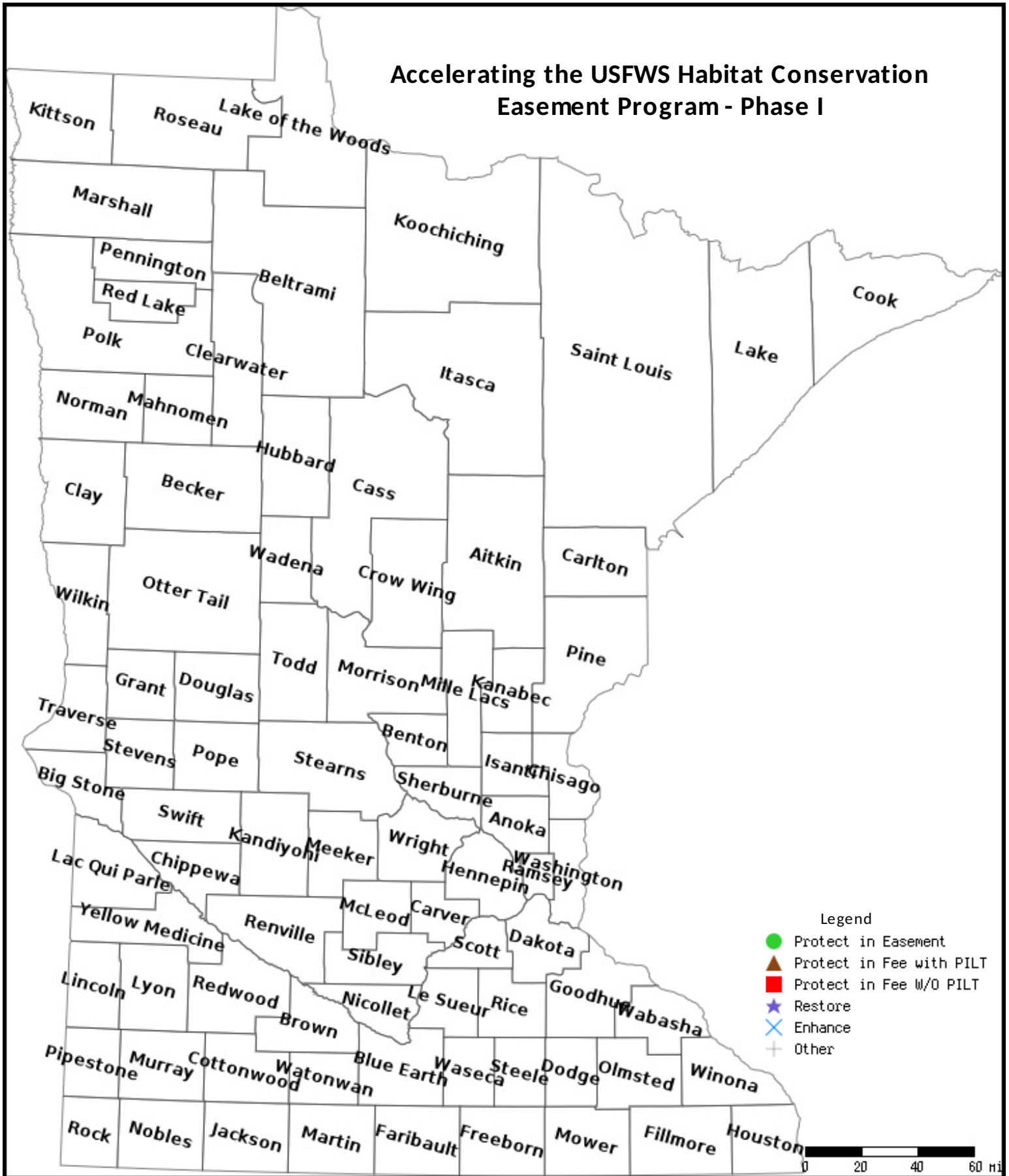
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

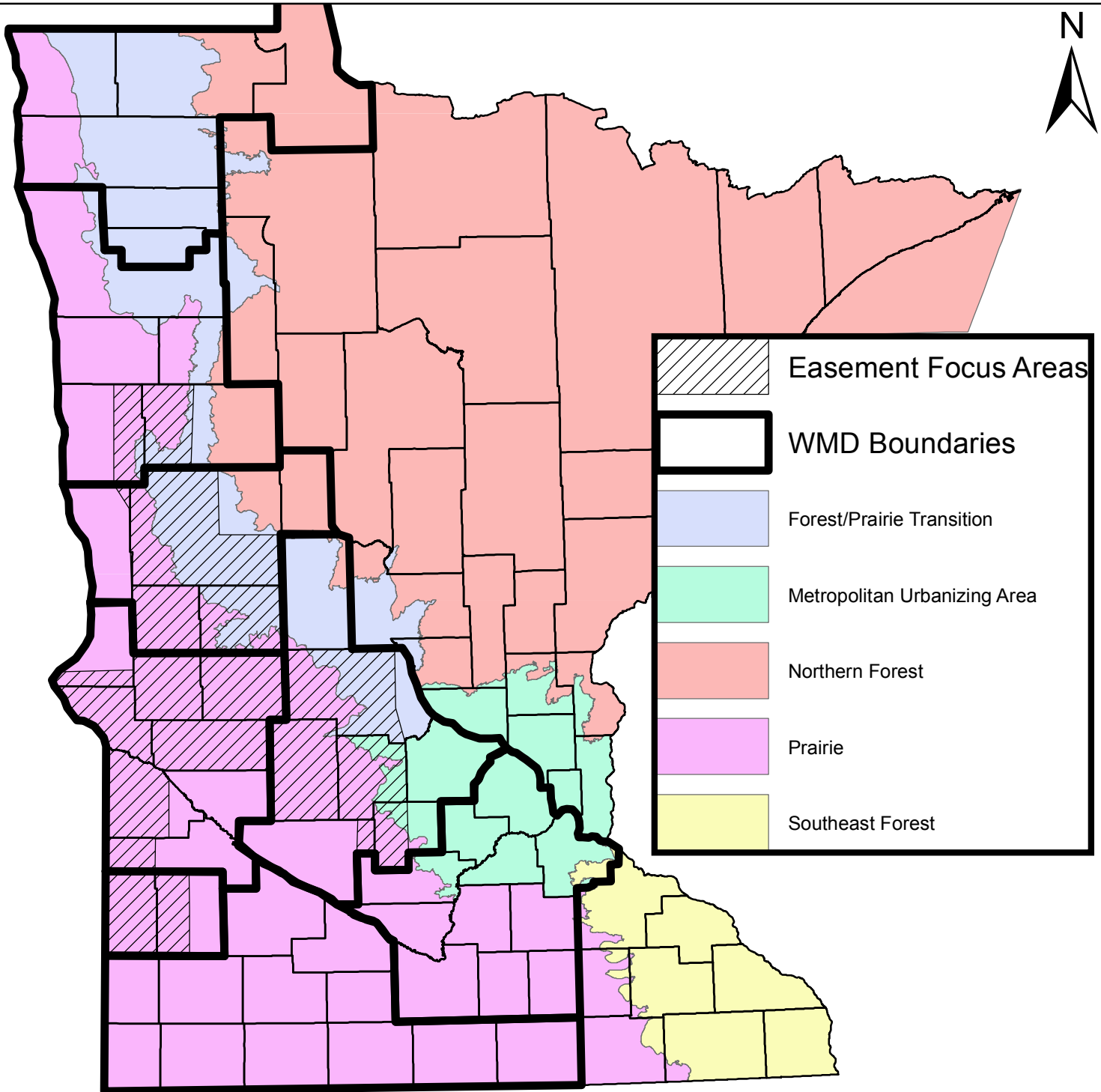
Accelerating the USFWS Habitat Conservation Easement Program - Phase I



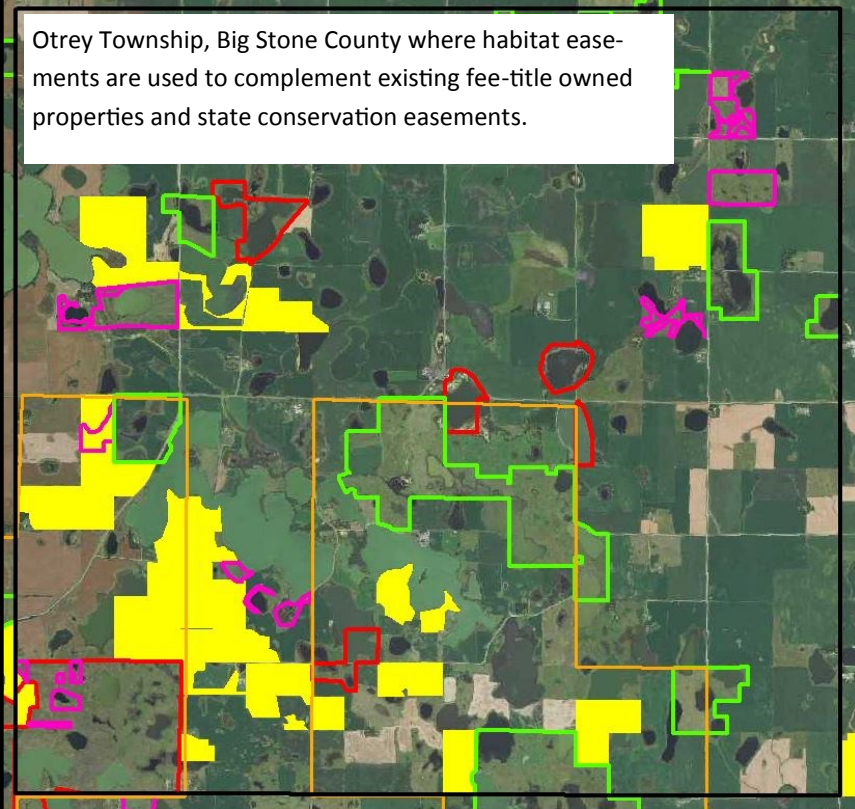
Data Generated From Parcel List

Accelerating the USFWS Habitat Easement Program

FWS Wetland Management Districts: Big Stone, Detroit Lakes, Fergus Falls, Litchfield, Minnesota Valley, Morris, Windom



Otrey Township, Big Stone County where habitat easements are used to complement existing fee-title owned properties and state conservation easements.



Alex Galt

-  Pheasant Plan Complex
-  WPA Boundaries
-  RIM Easements
-  WMA Boundaries
-  Habitat Easements

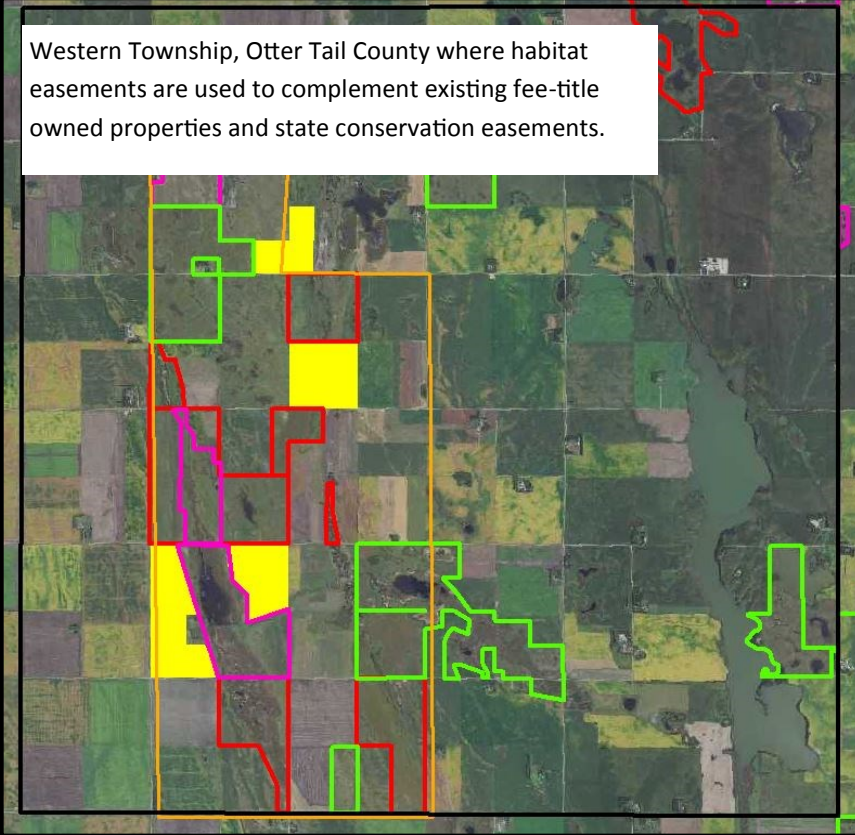


Alex Galt



Rex Johnson

Western Township, Otter Tail County where habitat easements are used to complement existing fee-title owned properties and state conservation easements.



Shawn May



Stacy Salvevold



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

5600 American Boulevard West, Suite 990
Bloomington, Minnesota 55437-1458



May 22, 2017

FWS/NWRS-RFS3

Mr. Jon Schneider
State Coordinator
Ducks Unlimited

Dear Mr. Schneider:

The purpose of this letter is to confirm our continued support and cooperation on our joint partnership involving Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC), funding for "Accelerating the Habitat Easement Program," and our application for grant funding.

For your 2018 grant application, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife-Service (Service), commits \$250,000 of in-kind staff support and one million dollars of our Migratory Bird Conservation Funds (duck stamp dollars) for the acquisition of habitat easements in Minnesota. These dollars can be used by Ducks Unlimited (DU) and Pheasants Forever (PF), as "leveraged" Federal dollars for this grant application. Service field staff (i.e. Realty and land management staff), will work to identify private landowners willing to sell interests in their land to Ducks Unlimited or Pheasants Forever. Once the property is acquired, converted wetlands and grasslands on these properties will be restored using an array of funding sources (i.e. LSOHC, Service, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, etc.) and then donated from DU or PF to the Service for inclusion into the National Wildlife Refuge System. Subsequent operation and management of these properties will be the responsibility of the Service.

We value this partnership with DU, PF and the LSOHC and look forward to our continued efforts to conserve, restore and enhance native grassland and wetland habitats in Minnesota for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of the American public. Thank you again for your continued support!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas M. Kerr".

Thomas Kerr
Refuge Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

USFWS Biological Prioritization Tool – Attach to API form for Habitat Easement proposals:

Tract _____ County _____ Date _____

The easement tract must possess a minimum 1:1 upland/wetland ratio. Exceptions may be considered. Justify below.

1. Waterfowl pair potential based on “Restorable Wetlands” model:

- 0-40 pairs – Low (5 pts)* *41-60 pairs – Medium (15 pts)* *61-80 pairs – High (25 pts)*
- 81-100 pairs – Highest (35 pts)* *>100 pairs – Exceptional (40 pts)*

2. Including tract, adjoins (within ¼ mile) a contiguous complex of perpetually protected lands totaling:

- 5 - 159 acres – Low (5 pts)* *160 - 639 acres - Medium (15 pts)*
- 640 - 1119 acres – High (25 pts)* *1120 + acres – Highest (35 pts)*

3. Tract contains remnant native prairie totaling:

- 0 – 9 acres (0 pts)* *10-39 acres (10 pts)* *40+ acres (20 pts)*

4. Bonus Points: Does the tract possess recent documentation of a federally listed species or critical habitat (T&E), present a significant risk of habitat loss if protection is delayed, involve multiple landowners, or contribute additional non-MBCF funding ? Justify below:

No (0 pts)

Yes (5 pts):

- 1. _____pts
- 2. _____pts
- 3. _____pts
- 4. _____pts

Approved - Refuge Supervisor

Total score: _____