

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

## Fiscal Year 2020 / ML 2019 Request for Funding



**Date:** May 31, 2018

**Program or Project Title:** Enhanced Public Land – Open Landscapes

**Funds Requested:** \$1,968,900

**Manager's Name:** Alex Nelson

**Title:** MN Habitat Restoration Manager

**Organization:** Minnesota Sharp-Tailed Grouse Society/Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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**County Locations:** Not Listed

**Regions in which work will take place:**

- Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

- Enhance

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Forest

### Abstract:

This proposal will enhance 6,000 acres of open landscape habitat in the Northern Forest Region to create early successional habitat that benefits sharp-tailed grouse and other wildlife species. Habitat will be enhanced through tree removal, prescribed fire, diversity seeding, conservation grazing, brush mowing, and shearing. Enhancements will take place on permanently protected lands open to public hunting including Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), state forest lands, and county-owned lands.

### Design and scope of work:

The sharp-tailed grouse was once common on Minnesota's open and brushland habitats. However, the loss of habitat to cropland, tree plantations and natural succession, have significantly decreased the acreage of suitable habitat for sharp-tailed grouse and other early successional habitat dependent species. A long-term decline in sharp-tailed grouse populations has caused them to be listed as a Minnesota species of greatest conservation need.

In the Northern Forest Region of Minnesota, activities that enhance and restore open landscapes such as prescribed fire, mowing and shearing, tree removal, diversity seeding, and conservation grazing will be implemented to ensure our public lands are reaching their full potential for wildlife habitat.

Prescribed fire is the primary management tool for managing or creating early successional habitat where conditions are appropriate. Prescribed fire increases vigor, sets back natural succession of woody species, and removes built up residue.

In some cases where fire is not possible due to site conditions or type of vegetation, mowing and shearing of small diameter brush and trees will be used.

In areas with larger trees that cannot be burned or mowed, tree removal will be done. Tree removal will not occur in areas where timber harvest would be marketable because most projects are too small to make them profitable for logging and/or are removing smaller undesirable trees and brush.

We will use a site-specific combination of techniques (e.g. cultivation, tree removal, herbicide, and prescribed fire) to bring back productivity to these public lands. A diverse mixture of native grasses and forbs is ideal for nesting and brood rearing of upland nesting birds such as sharp-tailed grouse. In close collaboration with the land managers we are ensuring only native species to the region are planted. We will seed a diverse mix of native grasses and forbs that are well adapted to site conditions. Mowing will be used as needed to manage annual weed pressure and to ensure establishment.

Conservation grazing is an important enhancement tool for sites that are difficult to conduct prescribed fire or need to target specific enhancement needs (e.g. cool season grass, brush, and tree suppression). Permanent infrastructure with a lifespan of 30+ years will be installed to conduct conservation grazing plans written to benefit wildlife on WMAs only with appropriate site conditions where livestock producers are currently nearby.

The primary objective of these activities is to create early successional habitat, set back tree encroachment, and reestablish open landscapes. As a secondary outcome we will be making future management and preservation of this habitat more practical. These enhancement activities will be prioritized around areas with existing and historic sharp-tailed grouse leks, as well as open landscape areas that will benefit species such as ring-necked pheasants, bobolinks, Henslow's sparrow, and eastern meadowlarks.

A request for proposal will be sent to land managers within the work area. A ranking process has been developed that allows us to identify, rank, and deliver the projects that have the most impact for wildlife.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- LU10 Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands

## **Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:**

- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

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

Plan indicators will be advanced by reversing habitat fragmentation and the degradation of habitat on public lands. Multiple benefits will be achieved including improved habitats, increased wildlife populations and biodiversity while also providing resiliency to invasive species. Public lands and their habitats are not reaching the full potential and must be enhanced. The habitats are used by a wide range of SGCN, including open and brush land habitat dependent birds and pollinators in decline, and are will be prioritized to be located in the WAP Wildlife Action Network, DNR priority open landscapes and Important Birding Areas. DNR SCA goals of natural resource conservation will be addressed, outdoor recreation opportunity improved, the natural resources economy stimulated (contractors hired, ecotourism boosted) and will require less resources for future management.

## **Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:**

### **Northern Forest:**

- Restore and enhance habitat on existing protected properties, with preference to habitat for rare, endangered, or threatened species identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey

## **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:**

Sharp-tailed grouse numbers in the Forest region of Minnesota depend on open landscapes and early successional habitat. If these habitats are not created and maintained, we will lose sharp-tailed grouse in the region. The legacy of the proposal will be as part of the success story of keeping sharp-tailed grouse in the Forest region of Minnesota.

This proposal will increase the quantity and quality of open landscapes and early successional habitat in the Northern Forest region. That enhanced habitat will benefit not only sharp-tailed grouse but other early successional habitat dependent species. Many of these species have been in decline within the Northern Forest region of Minnesota. If immediate action is not taken many of them may disappear from the region as well.

## **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:**

The sharp-tailed grouse is an indicator species of quality open landscapes and brushland habitat. By prioritizing projects around existing and historic sharp-tailed grouse leks, this proposal will improve the quality of existing open lands complexes. Additionally, by working with foresters and wildlife managers at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources along with county land managers to identify areas with the highest potential for quality open landscape habitats we can ensure enhancement activities will have the greatest benefits to wildlife.

## **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 seeks to enhance open landscapes and early successional habitats. These areas are of great importance to sharp-tailed grouse as well as many declining species such as bobolinks, loggerhead shrikes, short-eared owls, yellow rails, eastern meadowlarks, American bittern, northern harrier, golden-winged warblers, Henslow's sparrow, Le Conte's sparrow, Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow, and American woodcock. Six of these species are state listed as endangered, threatened or special concern.

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

**Golden-winged Warblers**

Suggested by the USFWS as a species representative of shrubland systems in the Upper Midwest , Golden-winged Warblers (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) are also recognized as a Minnesota Species in Greatest Conservation Need (stewardship species) due to the relatively large percentage of the global population that breeds within the state. Often associated with shrubland habitat and regenerating forests, more current research indicates a variety of forest habitats are required by Golden-winged Warblers (a matrix of shrubby wetlands and uplands, regenerating forests, and mature forests)<sup>2</sup>. The range map for the Golden-winged Warbler in Minnesota covers a good portion of the LSOHC Northern Forest planning section. While territories vary in size, an average of 4 pairs for every 10 hectares , may be translated to roughly 6 pairs for every 40 acres.

**White-tailed deer**

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) use a wide variety of forested habitats, are found throughout Minnesota, and are an important game species in the state. Deer have also been suggested as potential ecological indicators for forest systems . In the 33 forested deer permit areas for which deer densities are estimated, covering most of the LSOHC Northern Forest section, the six-year average (2010-2015) for pre-fawn deer densities across all deer permit areas is 13 deer per square mile of land (excluding water) . This translates to 0.02 deer (pre-fawning) per acre of forest land habitat or roughly 1 deer (pre-fawning) for every 50 acres of land.

**Outcomes:**

**Programs in the northern forest region:**

- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species *Sharp tail Leks are monitored annually in the northern forest region by the MN DNR. The number of leks identified is a good measure of quality open landscape habitat.*

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

The portions of enhancement work that will be completed by this proposal will generally allow the unit to be managed more effectively by the resource manager, whether that be on a WMA, county property or State Forest. While it's difficult for a third party like Pheasants Forever to provide an analysis of future costs on existing public land, work done under this proposal will facilitate future management activities by establishing grazing infrastructure, establishing fire breaks, or setting back natural succession.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Project Completion - WMA	MN DNR - Game and Fish Funds	Monitoring	Maintenance	

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

Historically early successional habitat was created by natural forces such as fire and most recently by humans using low intensity farming practices such as haying and grazing. As these repressors of succession decrease, natural succession continues to turn open landscapes into forests. Wildlife species that rely on these habitats are disappearing at an increasingly rapid rate. Enhancing these habitats as soon as possible is extremely important not only to ensure wildlife species do not fall below recoverable levels, but also because enhancement of these lands becomes more expensive and time consuming as brushlands and forests mature.

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

Available funding continues to be a limiting factor for enhancement programs. This proposal builds upon past appropriations awarded to MSGS and PF. Habitat enhancement efforts must be accelerated to sustain and grow quality wildlife habitat on Minnesota's public lands. This grant significantly accelerates our ability to enhance priority parcels. This proposal accelerates the enhancement of valuable open landscape habitat that focus on sharp-tail grouse and other wildlife while providing improved outdoor recreation activities such as hunting, bird watching, and trapping in Minnesota's great outdoors.

## Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

## Describe the relationship of the funds:

Not Listed

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Any state agency or organization requesting a direct appropriation from the OHF must inform the LSOHC at the time of the request for funding is made, whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose:

This proposal supplements past investments and is aimed at accelerating the enhancement of strategic parcels.

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2002-2010	Heritage Enhancement Grants	\$145,000 HE / \$14,500 PF
2015-2017	NAWCA	\$150,000 HE

## Activity Details

### Requirements:

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

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program - **Yes**

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 - **Yes (WMA, County/Municipal, State Forests)**

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **No**

### Land Use:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **No**

## Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Distribute Project Request for Proposals to Area Land Managers	Fall 2019
Review Project RFPs with project selection committee	Winter 2019-20
Select Projects for completion and hire contractors. Start enhancement/restoration work	Winter 2020
Enhancement / Restoration work continues	Spring, Summer Fall 2020
Re-evaluate project status/budget and solicit additional projects as needed	Winter 2021
Enhancement / Restoration work completed	Summer 2024

# Budget Spreadsheet

**Total Amount of Request: \$1,968,900**

## Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$130,000	\$0		\$130,000
Contracts	\$1,800,000	\$25,000	MSG S, Federal, Private, PF	\$1,825,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
Professional Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	\$28,900	\$0		\$28,900
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$1,968,900	\$25,000		\$1,993,900

## Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF Grants Staff	0.17	3.00	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
State Coordinator - MN	0.03	3.00	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
PF Field Staff	0.34	3.00	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Total	0.54	9.00	\$130,000	\$0		\$130,000

Amount of Request: \$1,968,900

Amount of Leverage: \$25,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 1.27%

DSS + Personnel: \$158,900

As a % of the total request: 8.07%

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:

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, and travel. We are donating the difference in-kind.

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

We anticipate that all of the contract funding will be used for enhancement activities.

### 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:

n/a

### Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Leverage is expected from multiple sources including but not limited to federal sources, contractor donations, MSGS, and PF. Not every source is 100% confirmed at this point. However, PF and MSGS have an exemplary track record of delivery and over-achievement of

match commitments that further stretch OHF funding.

**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:**

If scaled back, this proposal would be reduced proportionately across all categories of the budget and output tables.

## 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	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	6,000	0	6,000
Total	0	0	6,000	0	6,000

**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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$1,968,900	\$0	\$1,968,900
Total	\$0	\$0	\$1,968,900	\$0	\$1,968,900

**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	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	6,000	6,000
Total	0	0	0	0	6,000	6,000

**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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,968,900	\$1,968,900
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,968,900	\$1,968,900

**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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$328	\$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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$328

**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:**

A request for proposals will be sent to all land managers within the forest region. Submitted projects will be reviewed for eligibility, and ranked by a selection committee that will consist of staff from MSGS, MN DNR, and PF.

## **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**

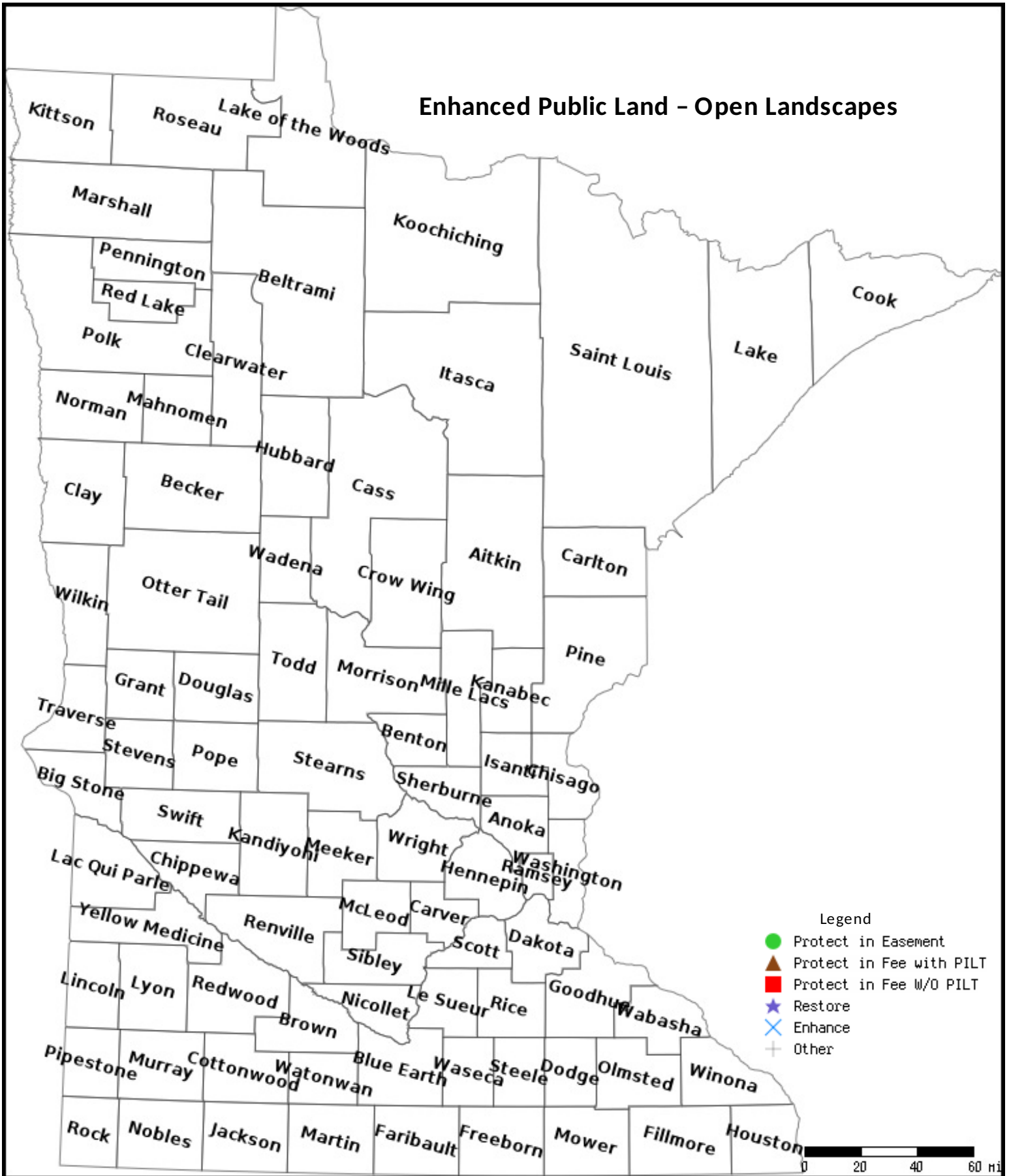
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

## **Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity**

No parcels with an other activity type.

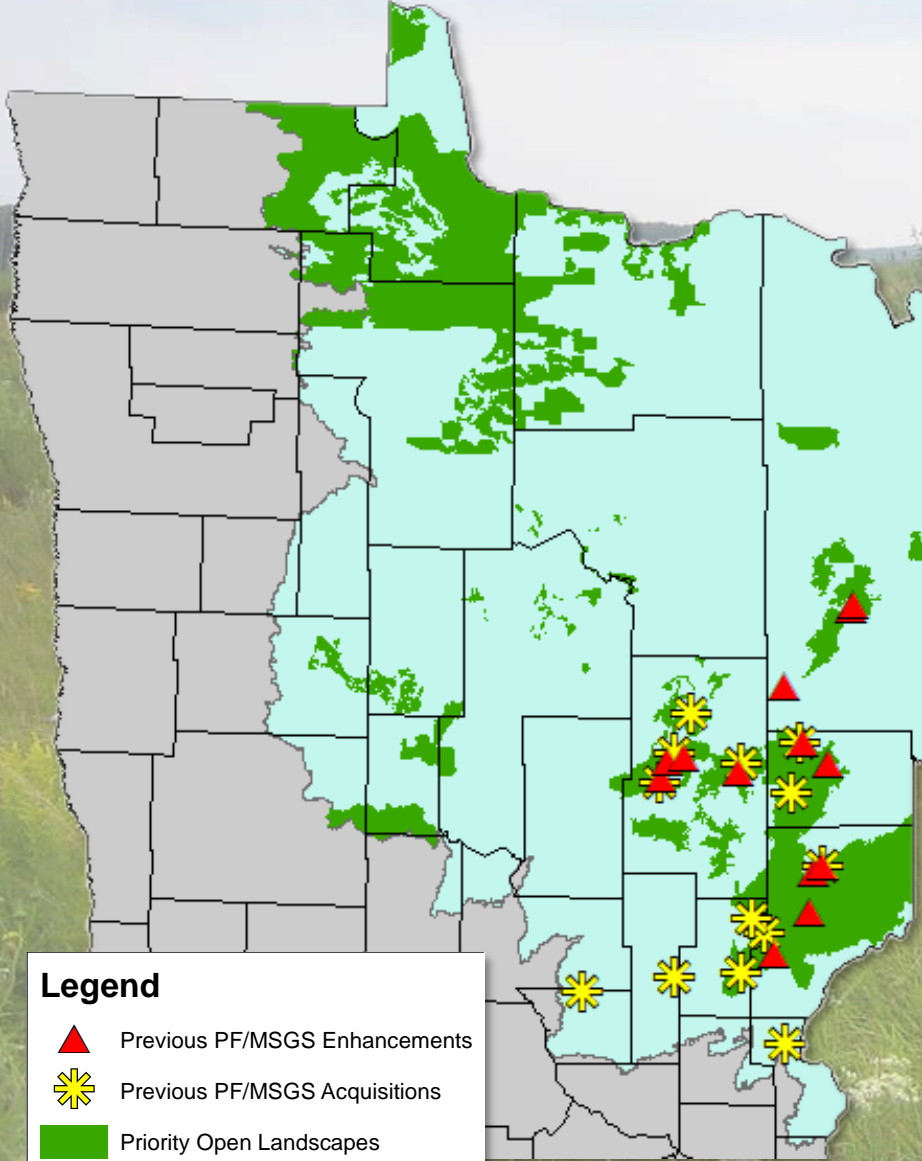
# Parcel Map

## Enhanced Public Land - Open Landscapes



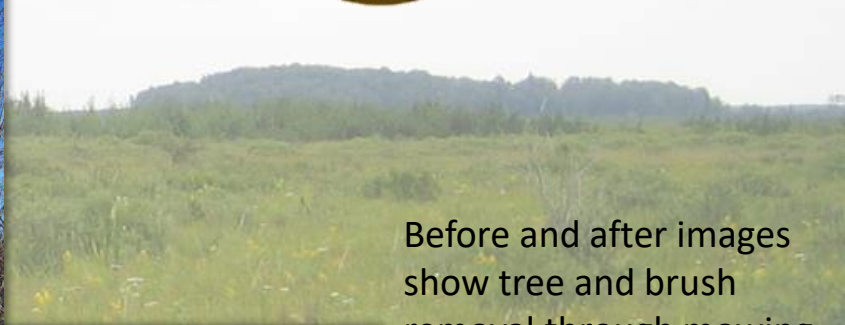
Data Generated From Parcel List

# Enhanced Public Lands- Open Landscapes



- Legend**
- ▲ Previous PF/MSGs Enhancements
  - ✱ Previous PF/MSGs Acquisitions
  - Priority Open Landscapes
  - LSOHC Planning Regions- Forest

Before



Before and after images show tree and brush removal through mowing and shearing. This creates an open landscape for sharp-tailed grouse and other wildlife.



After



Figure 1. Map of the Forest Region, illustrates how this proposal will further increase open landscape habitats, building upon previous state investment to increase value of each project.

# Before



Figure 3. Prescribed fire is the primary management tool for managing or creating early successional habitat where conditions are appropriate. Prescribed fire increases vigor, sets back natural succession of woody species, and removes built up residue. Sites where fire is not feasible, brush shearing, mowing and conservation grazing may be used.



# After

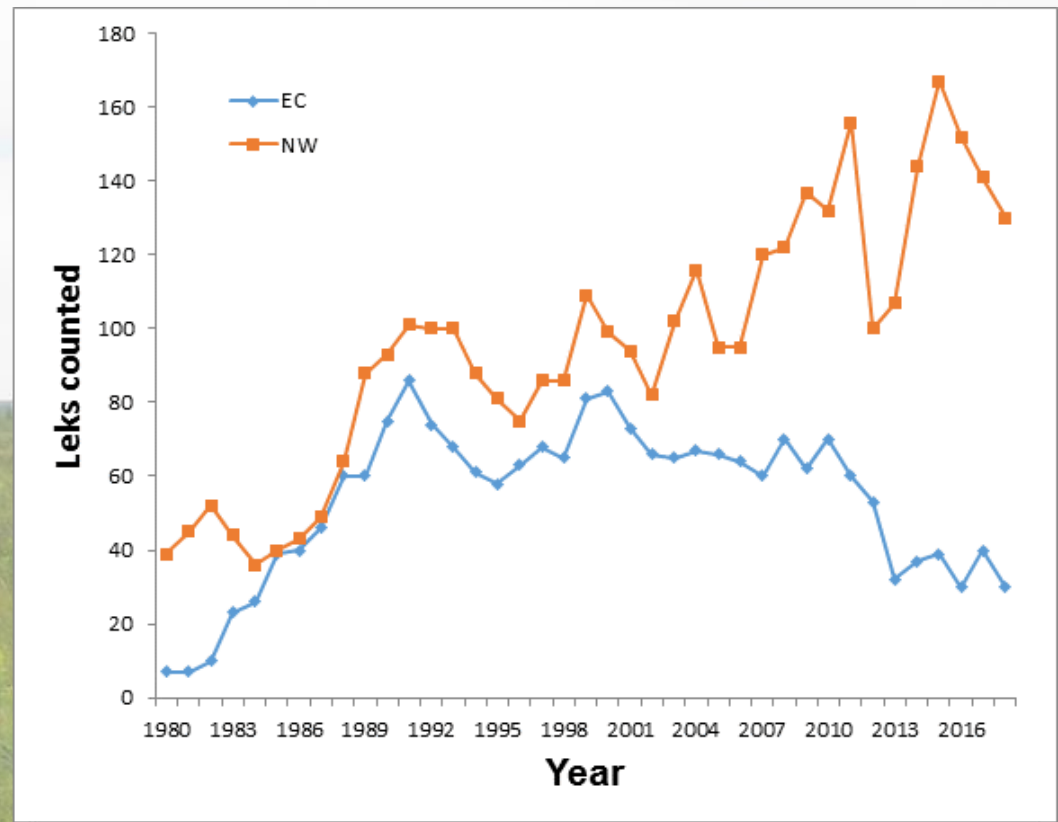


Figure 4. Graph depicts the decline of Sharp-tailed grouse leks counted in the East Central Region. This proposal seeks to improve open landscape habitats that will benefit sharp-tailed grouse and increase numbers of counted leks in the East Central population.

C. Roy, MNDNR, unpubl. data

## Enhanced Public Lands- Open Landscapes Scoring Sheet

Updated 5/30/2018

WMA/ State Forest/ County Land	County	Township/Range/Section	Date:

**Project Type**

- Tree Removal   
  Prescribed Fire   
  Diversity Seeding   
  Conservation Grazing   
  Brush Mowing/Shearing

**Must meet all these requirements to be eligible**

- 1  Project is located in an eligible priority region (Forest)
- 2  Project will occur on existing WMA, State Forest or County Owned land
- 3  Project is approved by appropriate public land manager
- 4  Project is open to public hunting
- 5  Without these funds, project would not be completed
- 6  Project can be completed by private contractor through Pheasants Forever procurement

<b>Are you Eligible</b>	<b>NO</b>
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**Factors ( Check all that apply)**

	Possible Points	Score
1 <input type="checkbox"/> Project affect increase wildlife productivity of open or brushland habitat.	5 pts	0
2 <input type="checkbox"/> Project will benefit T&E or SGCN species	10 pts	0
3 <b>How large is existing contiguous public lands habitat complex?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> >240 acres <input type="checkbox"/> 81 - 240 acres <input type="checkbox"/> < 80 acres	25 pts 15 pts 5 pts	0
4 <input type="checkbox"/> Project will help reduce future management costs	10 pts	0
6 <b>Distance to nearest Lek</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 10 miles <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 miles <input type="checkbox"/> Greater than 20 miles	15 pts 10 pts 0 pts	0
7 <b>Wildlife Action Network Score as Identified in the Wildlife Action Plan</b> <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium-High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low- Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Out of Area	15 pts 12 pts 9 pts 6 pts 3 pts 0 pts	0
8 <b>Other Factors</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Within DNR Priority Open Landscapes Area	15 pts	0

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>
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