

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2021 / ML 2020 Request for Funding

PA 09



Date: May 30, 2019

Program or Project Title: Heron Lake Area Conservation Partnership

Funds Requested: \$9,610,900

Manager's Name: Jan Voit

Organization: Heron Lake Watershed District

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County Locations: Jackson, and Murray.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

Abstract:

The Heron Lake Area Conservation Partnership (HLACP) will permanently protect 990 acres of prairie and wetlands within the Heron Lake watershed in southwest Minnesota. The landscape has less than one percent of its pre-settlement wetlands remaining. The HLACP will use conservation easements and fee-title land acquisition to protect and restore high-value wetland and prairie lands identified as critical habitat for many Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SG CN). Tracts will be prioritized and landowner outreach targeted to maximize wildlife habitat conservation benefit and financial investment.

Design and scope of work:

Heron Lake was once a water bird production and migration area of international significance. The vast beds of wild celery and robust stands of bulrush, combined with a seemingly endless prairie around the lake, supported an awe-inspiring number of colonial water birds, waterfowl, and other migratory birds. Observations recorded around the turn of the century reported 700,000 staging canvasbacks, 50,000 nesting Franklin's gulls, and hundreds of thousands of other migratory birds using Heron Lake and surrounding marshes.

With the movement of settlers to the area, the prairie ecosystem was converted to an intensive row crop landscape. This conversion resulted in the drainage of 99.3% of the original wetlands, destruction of 99% of the native prairie, and loss of many species of native flora and fauna. Agriculture was not the only threat. As towns grew, so did their contribution to natural resource degradation.

An increase in the quality and quantity of waterfowl and wetland wildlife habitat within the Heron Lake watershed is critical. This partnership aims to protect and restore prairie and wetland habitats, the first concerted effort of this type in many years. Efforts are supported by the Heron Lake Waterfowl Working Group, a recently formed partnership of conservation and government organizations focusing on restoration efforts within the watershed.

Heron Lake Watershed District Conservation Technician:

The HLWD will hire a Conservation Technician to proactively contact prospective landowners, explain options for flood-prone land, build relationships to develop conservation opportunities, and assist with implementation. Tracts will be targeted within priority areas

using a combination of conservation plans and models. Local coordination and outreach to develop partnerships with landowners and local officials is key to project success.

Conservation Easements:

The HLWD Conservation Technician will coordinate with partners (County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, MNDNR, USFWS, PF, DU, and MLT) to identify landowners interested in managing their lands for wildlife habitat in perpetuity. Landowners will submit proposals to MLT using a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process that will rank properties based on ecological value and cost, prioritizing the projects that provide the best ecological value and acquiring them at the lowest cost to the state. MLT will secure approximately 550 acres of permanent conservation easements and develop restoration/habitat management plans for eased acres. Lands eased will not be open for public use, however partners and the HLWD Conservation Technician will inform landowners and encourage enrollment in the State Walk-In Access Program. The HLWD and MLT, in cooperation with DU, PF, and USFWS Partners Private Lands Program, will restore/enhance approximately 550 acres of wetland and associated upland habitat on conservation easements.

Fee acquisition:

DU and PF will coordinate with the MNDNR and USFWS Windom Wetland Management District on potential fee-title acquisitions. DU and PF will work with willing sellers to purchase and restore four tracts or 440 acres of land strategically identified within the HLWD, and then donate the parcels to the MNDNR as a WMA or USFWS as a WPA, where they will be managed in perpetuity.

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

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

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN

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

In the MNDNR's Long Range Duck Recovery Plan, the first goal is to recover historical breeding and migrating populations of ducks in MN for their ecological, recreational, and economic importance to the citizens of the state. The primary strategy to meet this goal is the restoration and protection of habitat in wetland/grassland habitat complexes. Our proposed program will prioritize land for restoration and protection through acquisition and easement, using programs available through current state, federal, and conservation organizations.

The MNDNR's Long Range Plan for the Ring-necked Pheasant presumes maximized efficiency by focusing habitat efforts on balancing reproductive and winter habitat needs within small landscapes based on research and inventory completed under the plan. Our proposed effort will prioritize efforts that will protect, acquire, maintain, and improve habitat through conservation provisions of state, federal, and conservation organizations.

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

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 990 acres of prairie and wetlands adjacent to existing public and protected land complexes. Many studies describe that larger tracts of intact habitat provide the greatest value for wildlife. Work such as this will help to increase the patch size and viability of existing critical habitat for wetland and prairie-dependent wildlife. Further, restoration and protection activities within the Heron Lake Watershed will undoubtedly provide downstream benefits to North and South Heron Lakes- arguably some of the most historically important shallow lakes in Southwest MN and beyond. Lands acquired and restored will be transferred to the MNDNR or the USFWS for long-term management and public recreational use. Lands eased through this program will be restored back to their historical extent and protected from further conversion in perpetuity. MLT will ensure active management on eased lands through active and proven stewardship. Partners will strive to inform landowners who chose to ease their lands about the state's Walk-In Access program to provide additional hunting access within the watershed. It has taken over 100 years to fragment the prairie landscape, and it will take a coordinated, strategic long-term approach to restore wildlife habitat here, piece by piece and prairie

wetland complex by complex. This partnership will significantly add to the conservation legacy for the public, and in the long-term, will result in permanently protected viable habitat patches and complexes for the benefit of both wildlife and people.

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:

This partnership aims to build upon existing investments in public and protected lands within the Heron Lake Watershed in order to establish greater function of habitat complexes that echo the pre-settlement level of wildlife use and productivity. The HLACP will target acquired or eased lands by identifying focus areas within the Heron Lake Watershed with numerous restorable wetlands adjacent to existing public and protected lands. Due to significant historical conversion of prairie wetlands within the watershed (<1% remain) we will utilize the USFWS Restorable Wetlands Duck Production model along with public and protected lands layers and areas identified within the MN Prairie Plan, MN Long Range Duck Recovery Plan, Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN, and the MN County Biological Survey to identify high-value existing complexes where land protection will contribute significantly to existing investments. The HLWD Conservation Technician, with support from partners, will then conduct boots-on-the-ground outreach to landowners within these focus areas. The ultimate objective is to identify tracts in which protection and restoration can provide "multiple benefits" or the highest wildlife habitat and public value within the watershed while in turn providing downstream benefits to Heron Lake itself. Once specific parcels and willing landowners have been identified, tracts will be scrutinized further according to wetland restoration potential and feasibility, size of tract, condition of existing habitat, acquisition and restoration expense, NGO Partner goals and values, and DNR and USFWS interest.

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:

The Heron Lake Area is a significant migratory corridor for waterfowl and other migratory species and was once a highly productive breeding landscape for prairie and wetland-dependent wildlife. Jackson and Nobles Counties, which includes most of the Heron Lake Watershed, have less than one percent of the wetlands that were present at the time of settlement by European-Americans. Wetlands have been reduced in the two counties from greater than 284,000 acres in the late 1800's to presently about 2,000 acres. A primary issue in wetland loss is the loss of water storage, as well as the water quality and other ecological services that wetlands provide. The loss of wetlands has caused extreme lake level fluctuations on the main Heron Lakes, which has degraded wetland wildlife habitat in and around the lakes. Flooding has been observed to cause lake-levels to rise close to three feet within 48 hours.

According to the "Characterization of Rainfall-Runoff Response and Estimation of the Effect of Wetland Restoration on Runoff, Heron Lake Basin, Southwestern Minnesota, 1991-97" done by Perry Jones, USGS, "The restoration of wetlands in the Heron Lake Basin may reduce peak and total runoff by increasing available depressional storage and by increasing the potential for evaporation and transpiration. Riparian wetlands adjacent to streams provide hydraulic and hydrologic benefits. Additional storage in riparian wetlands and increased resistance to downstream flow provided by additional wetland vegetation reduces peak discharges following storms."

This program will strive to reestablish high-value prairie and wetland habitat which is identified as critical habitat of many SG CN. Species such as bobolinks, upland sandpiper, grasshopper sparrow, Eastern meadowlark, short-eared owl, Northern harrier, dickcissel, Northern grasshopper mouse, Arogos skipper, and Sullivant's milkweed will benefit from the high diversity grassland restored and protected within the watershed. Upland nesting waterfowl and other wetland-dependent SG CN that historically utilized habitat across the watershed such as Northern pintail, Franklin's gull, trumpeter swan, black tern, American bittern, Wilson's phalarope, burrowing owl, Le Conte's sparrow, and marbled godwit will all benefit from the estimated 180 acres of wetland restoration planned.

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

The HLWD, in coordination with DU, PF, and, MLT proposes to protect and restore 990 acres of prairie uplands and wetlands within the Heron Lake Watershed to build upon existing prairie-wetland habitat complexes for prairie and wetland dependent wildlife species. Science-based guidance indicates that 180 acres of wetlands and 810 acres of uplands may be estimated to:

Support approximately 73 pairs of 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 requires 2.47 acres of wetlands with adequate upland nesting habitat to support population growth;

Support at least one 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 476 pairs of bobolinks and 386 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 270 harvestable roosters annually, based on rough estimates indicating that every three acres of grassland habitat can produce one harvested rooster;

and contribute between 2,430 to 6,480 monarch butterflies to the overwintering population in Mexico, assuming 100-250 stems of milkweed plants per acre restored.

Outcomes:

Programs in prairie region:

- Agriculture lands are converted to grasslands to sustain functioning prairie systems *Lands near existing protected lands will be acquired or eased and restored back to functioning wetlands and native grass and forbs for waterfowl, ring-necked pheasants, pollinators and other prairie and wetland dependent wildlife. Lands will be transferred to the MNDNR or the USFWS to provide additional prairie habitat and public use. Restored lands that become WMAs or WPAs will be monitored by area MNDNR or USFWS staff and managed to optimize conditions for wildlife. Lands eased will be stewarded by MLT in perpetuity and actively managed in partnership with landowners to ensure continued wildlife habitat benefits long after restoration.*

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

All lands acquired in fee-title by DU and PF through this grant will be transferred to either the MNDNR as a WMA or to the USFWS as a WPA. Thus, MNDNR or USFWS managers will sustain and maintain the prairie and wetlands acquired and restored by DU and PF in perpetuity and manage them to provide optimal wildfire habitat for public use.

MLT will sustain the land protected through working lands conservation easements following Land Trust Alliance (LTA) easement stewardship standards and practices. MLT is an LTA nationally-accredited and insured land trust with a successful easement stewardship program that conducts annual property monitoring, maintains effective records management, addresses inquiries and interpretations, tracks changes in ownership, investigates potential violations and defends the easement in case of a true violation. Funding for these easement stewardship activities is included in the project budget. In addition, MLT encourages landowners to undertake active management of their properties, provides them with habitat management plans, and works with them to secure expertise and funding to undertake management activities over time. USFWS, DNR, DU, and PF biologists will provide technical assistance.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2027	DNR G&F Fund, USFWS, OHF	Monitor restored prairie for weed control	Periodically burn or graze tracts every 3-5 years as needed	Assess and manage water levels in larger restored wetlands as vegetation and ecological conditions warrant action

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

Nearly all wetlands and prairie have been drained and converted for agriculture within the Heron Lake Watershed. The public wildlife lands that exist are small, fragmented, and do not provide viable patches of functioning habitat. Because of this, Heron Lake, a Designated Wildlife Management Lake, has significantly declined to its present turbid and degraded quality, providing little value to both wildlife and the public. Working within the watershed to restore and protect habitat will provide benefits downstream and assist in improving this historically significant wildlife lake. This work is time-sensitive because private land within the watershed only rarely becomes available for sale to conservation interests. Further, recent historical flooding and a decline in crop revenue has provided a unique opportunity to engage and assist landowners within this watershed. Private landowners will not wait indefinitely for conservation funding, and a generation may pass before these key parcels become available once again.

Does this program include leverage in funds:

Yes

Partners will strive to use all non-federal expense to leverage federal North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant funds to further work within the HLWD. NAWCA, however, is highly competitive and complex so proposal success is uncertain. Partners will work closely with the MNDNR and the USFWS Wetland Management District to offer past state OHF acquisitions as non-federal match and leverage federal NAWCA funds to help fund OHF land restoration and acquire additional lands. The USFWS WMD will also offer their Private Lands Biologist for technical assistance on restorations within both fee-title and eased lands acquired within this grant. Local groups such as the North Heron Lake Game Producers Association and HLWD will also provide small amounts of funds as leverage as a testament for their passion for this important area of the state and the strength of this partnership.

MLT encourages landowners to fully or partially donate the appraised value of their conservation easement, thereby receiving less than the appraised value may otherwise allow. This donated value is shown as leveraged funds in the proposal and is expected to be 10% of

the acquisition cost. MLT has a long track record of incentivizing landowners to participate in this process.

Relationship to other funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund
- Clean Water Fund
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Section 319

Describe the relationship of the funds:

Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund (ENRTF)

The HLWD appropriation from the ENRTF in 2013 was used to install projects in Nobles, Jackson, and Murray Counties. These included a bioretention basin, multiple water and sediment control basins, a streambank stabilization, and a streambank stabilization. The purpose of these projects was to reduce sediment and nutrient loads into streams and lakes. The projects affected more than 300 acres and have an estimated reduction rate of 620 pounds of phosphorus and 575 tons of sediment per year. The grant dollars covered 75 percent of the project costs, with the landowner paying 25 percent.

Clean Water Fund (CWF)

The HLWD was awarded a CWF grant in 2019. Efforts will be focused on Jackson County Judicial Ditch (JD) 3, which has been petitioned to the HLWD for improvement. JD3 drains 52 percent of the South Heron Lake (SHL) watershed, highlighting its importance in making meaningful progress towards water pollution reduction. The practices include eleven water and sediment control basins and a 10-acre storage and treatment wetland restoration, which are proven to cost-effectively reduce phosphorus. The project also provides added benefits, such as erosion reduction, improved wildlife habitat, and protection from flooding. The practices provide a total phosphorus load reduction of 2,372 pounds annually.

Other Funds

The HLWD was awarded an EPA Section 319 grant in 2019. The primary purpose of this project is to reduce phosphorus entering SHL. To accomplish this purpose, the HLWD intends to restore and stabilize 1,995 feet of streambank in the Jackson County JD 3 system that outlets directly into SHL. In addition, two wetland restorations will be completed and nine alternative side inlets will be installed.

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 request is for land acquisition and easement funding to supplement traditional conservation activities and will not supplant or substitute traditional sources of funding for land acquisition.

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2013	ENRTF	\$116,031.98
2019	Clean Water Fund	\$61,500
2019	EPA Section 319	\$122,125

Activity Details

Requirements:

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

Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j) - **No**

The HLWD is a special purpose local unit of government whose boundaries follow those of the natural watershed. The HLWD was formed by petition to the Water Resources Board (now known as BWSR) in 1970. County Commissioners appoint a board of five managers - two from Nobles County, two from Jackson County, and one from Murray County. The managers serve three-year terms at the will of the County Commissioners. The Board of Managers of the HLWD unanimously approved this funding request prior to the development of this partnership and proposal. Further, the HLWD provides a monthly activity report to all County Boards within the watershed district. Each year, a PowerPoint presentation explaining HLWD activities is given to each county board. If funded, activities

conducted within this grant will be included in monthly updates and annual presentations.

Partners will also strive to have discussions and provide notification to County Boards prior to land acquisition. Due to the nature of land acquisitions as private and sensitive matters, disclosing details in advance of purchase agreements can jeopardize land deals. Requesting formal local approval requires county board members to vote on private land deals, which invites local politics and makes private landowner's intentions public. Partners will not seek local government pre-approval of our land acquisitions but instead meet with county boards in person to inform and discuss to ensure local government awareness of the public benefits of land acquisition and restoration work in the Heron Lake Watershed.

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

A very limited number of tracts may include a federal or state easement which provide permanent protection for wetlands or grasslands. The value of these areas will be accommodated in the appraisal.

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

A very limited number of tracts may include a federal or state easement which provide permanent protection for wetlands or grasslands. The value of these areas will be accommodated in the appraisal.

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

Are the funds confirmed - **No**

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds - **July 2022 via future NAWCA grants for restoration of land acquired via OHF.**

Land Use:

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

Explain

It is a common practice to utilize cropping to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding to accommodate herbicide carry-over. Increasingly, farmers are using herbicides with an 18-month carryover residual effect that requires an additional year of farming with other compatible herbicides before native plants can be seeded. In restorations non-neonicotinoid treated seed and herbicide limited to glyphosate will be utilized in any farming practices on these lands. Partners will also strive to work with farmers who can incorporate crops that benefit wildlife, increases soil health, and absorb excess nutrients. These might include cover crops such as oats or rape seed.

Finally, fee-title acquisitions to be donated as State Wildlife Management Areas may incorporate very limited farming specifically to enhance or benefit the management of state lands for wildlife and compatible outdoor recreation. On a small percentage of WMAs (less than 2.5%) MNDNR uses farming to provide a winter food source for a variety of wildlife species in agriculture-dominated landscapes (such as the Heron Lake Watershed) largely devoid of winter food sources.

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

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion - **Yes**

Fee-title acquisition land secured as part of this project will be open for public hunting and fishing.

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 - **Yes**

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

Most conservation easements are established on private lands, many of which have driveways, field roads and trails located on them. Often, these established trails and roads are permitted in the terms of the easement and can be maintained for personal use if their use does not significantly impact the conservation values of the property. Creation of new roads/trails or expansion of existing ones is typically not allowed.

Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition - **Yes**

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

Existing trails and roads are identified in the project baseline report and will be monitored annually as part of the Land Trust's

stewardship and enforcement protocols. Maintenance of permitted roads/trails in line with the terms of the easement will be the responsibility of the landowner.

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

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
HLWD will advertise and hire a Conservation Technician	December 2020
HLWD Conservation Technician will conduct targeted outreach to identify tracts	December 2021
Prioritize, appraise, survey and acquire lands in fee-title or easement	June 2022
Restore Lands acquired and transfer to the Minnesota DNR or USFWS Windom Wetland Management District	June 2027
Restore Lands under easement to be managed and monitored by MLT	June 2027
Complete conservation easements by MLT	June 2022

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$9,610,900

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$617,400	\$34,100	DU, Private, Federal NAWCA,HLWD & NHLGPA	\$651,500
Contracts	\$2,132,000	\$18,000	USFWS Private Lands Program	\$2,150,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$2,760,000	\$75,000	PF, Private, Federal	\$2,835,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$750,000	\$25,000	PF, Private, Federal	\$775,000
Easement Acquisition	\$2,500,000	\$250,000	Private landowners	\$2,750,000
Easement Stewardship	\$192,000	\$0		\$192,000
Travel	\$98,700	\$3,000	DU, Private, Federal NAWCA	\$101,700
Professional Services	\$194,200	\$0		\$194,200
Direct Support Services	\$102,100	\$0		\$102,100
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$8,000	\$0		\$8,000
Supplies/Materials	\$148,500	\$0		\$148,500
DNR IDP	\$28,000	\$0		\$28,000
Total	\$9,610,900	\$405,100		\$10,016,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Biologist and Engineers - Acquire and Restore Land	2.00	3.00	\$200,000	\$20,000	DU, Private, Federal NAWCA	\$220,000
Grants Staff	0.03	3.00	\$6,000	\$0		\$6,000
State Coordinator	0.01	3.00	\$3,000	\$0		\$3,000
Field Staff	0.03	3.00	\$6,000	\$0		\$6,000
Conservation Technician	1.00	5.00	\$188,400	\$14,100	HLWD & NHLGPA	\$202,500
Conservation Staff, Legal Staff & Support Staff	0.75	3.00	\$214,000	\$0		\$214,000
Total	3.82	20.00	\$617,400	\$34,100		\$651,500

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Ducks Unlimited	\$200,000	\$20,000	DU, Private, Federal NAWCA	\$220,000
Contracts	Ducks Unlimited	\$600,000	\$0		\$600,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Ducks Unlimited	\$1,760,000	\$0		\$1,760,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Ducks Unlimited	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	Ducks Unlimited	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	Ducks Unlimited	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	Ducks Unlimited	\$30,000	\$3,000	DU, Private, Federal NAWCA	\$33,000
Professional Services	Ducks Unlimited	\$32,000	\$0		\$32,000
Direct Support Services	Ducks Unlimited	\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Ducks Unlimited	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
Capital Equipment	Ducks Unlimited	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Ducks Unlimited	\$3,000	\$0		\$3,000
Supplies/Materials	Ducks Unlimited	\$140,000	\$0		\$140,000
DNR IDP	Ducks Unlimited	\$15,000	\$0		\$15,000
Total		\$2,840,000	\$23,000		\$2,863,000

Personnel - Ducks Unlimited

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Biologist and Engineers - Acquire and Restore Land	2.00	3.00	\$200,000	\$20,000	DU, Private, Federal NAWCA	\$220,000
Total	2.00	3.00	\$200,000	\$20,000		\$220,000

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Pheasants Forever	\$15,000	\$0		\$15,000

Contracts	Pheasants Forever	\$170,000	\$0		\$170,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Pheasants Forever	\$1,000,000	\$75,000	PF, Private, Federal	\$1,075,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Pheasants Forever	\$750,000	\$25,000	PF, Private, Federal	\$775,000
Easement Acquisition	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	Pheasants Forever	\$3,700	\$0		\$3,700
Professional Services	Pheasants Forever	\$24,000	\$0		\$24,000
Direct Support Services	Pheasants Forever	\$4,300	\$0		\$4,300
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Pheasants Forever	\$40,000	\$0		\$40,000
Capital Equipment	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	Pheasants Forever	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	Pheasants Forever	\$13,000	\$0		\$13,000
Total		\$2,020,000	\$100,000		\$2,120,000

Personnel - Pheasants Forever

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Grants Staff	0.03	3.00	\$6,000	\$0		\$6,000
State Coordinator	0.01	3.00	\$3,000	\$0		\$3,000
Field Staff	0.03	3.00	\$6,000	\$0		\$6,000
Total	0.07	9.00	\$15,000	\$0		\$15,000

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$188,400	\$14,100	HLWD & NHLGPA	\$202,500
Contracts	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$1,308,000	\$18,000	USFWS Private Lands Program	\$1,326,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$50,000	\$0		\$50,000
Professional Services	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$8,500	\$0		\$8,500
DNR IDP	Heron Lake Watershed District	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$1,574,900	\$32,100		\$1,607,000

Personnel - Heron Lake Watershed District

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Conservation Technician	1.00	5.00	\$188,400	\$14,100	HLWD & NHLGPA	\$202,500
Total	1.00	5.00	\$188,400	\$14,100		\$202,500

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$214,000	\$0		\$214,000
Contracts	Minnesota Land Trust	\$54,000	\$0		\$54,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	Minnesota Land Trust	\$2,500,000	\$250,000	Private landowners	\$2,750,000
Easement Stewardship	Minnesota Land Trust	\$192,000	\$0		\$192,000
Travel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$15,000	\$0		\$15,000
Professional Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$138,200	\$0		\$138,200
Direct Support Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$57,800	\$0		\$57,800
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Minnesota Land Trust	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
Supplies/Materials	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0

Total	-	\$3,176,000	\$250,000	-	\$3,426,000
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Personnel - Minnesota Land Trust

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Conservation Staff, Legal Staff & Support Staff	0.75	3.00	\$214,000	\$0		\$214,000
Total	0.75	3.00	\$214,000	\$0	-	\$214,000

Amount of Request: \$9,610,900
Amount of Leverage: \$405,100
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 4.22%
DSS + Personnel: \$719,500
As a % of the total request: 7.49%
Easement Stewardship: \$192,000
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 7.68%

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

In a process that was approved by the DNR on March 17, 2017, Minnesota Land Trust determined our direct support services rate to include all of the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget, which is similar to the Land Trust's proposed federal indirect rate. We will apply this DNR approved rate only to personnel expenses to determine the total amount of the direct support services.

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 2% of the sum of personnel, contracts, professional services, and travel, and will donate the difference in-kind.

What is included in the contracts line?

Funds in the contract line cover expenses related to the implementation of Habitat Management and Restoration Plans via qualified vendors and contractor charges to restore wetlands and prairie on lands acquired and eased. In the case of wetlands, significant earth-moving will be required to restore wetland hydrology and remove sediment.

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental? - Yes

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

Travel for the HLWD includes a five year lease of vehicle for Conservation Technician travel in-state, vehicle insurance, maintenance and fuel.
MLT staff regularly rent-vehicles for grant-related purposes, which is a significant cost savings over use of personal vehicles. DU travel only includes in-state mileage, food, and lodging (primarily mileage and lodging for field biologists and engineering staff).

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Leverage includes local organization contributions, partner staff time, the donated value of conservation easements, DU and PF

organizational and private funds, foundations, corporations, federal NAWCA grant funds and USFWS Private Lands technical assistance on restoration.

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 project can be scaled proportionally to funding recommended on a cost per acre basis for fee-title and easement acquisition, restoration, and enhancement. Administrative costs can be reduced too if less funding is recommended than requested, albeit not proportionately due to base costs of program and grant administration and reporting.

What is the cost per easement for stewardship and explain how that amount is calculated?

The average cost per easement to perpetually fund the Minnesota Land Trust's long-term monitoring and enforcement obligations is \$24,000. This figure has been determined by using a detailed stewardship funding calculator or "cost analysis" which is the industry standard according to the Land Trust Accreditation process. This cost analysis examines seventeen different categories of future annual expenditures related to the management of the easement and then calculates what the Land Trust needs in one-time funding to cover these various expenditures in perpetuity. In addition, the Land Trust seeks private contributions whenever possible to further leverage these state funds. The Minnesota Land Trust reviews and updates this cost-analysis periodically to ensure that the organization will have the capacity to fulfill its ongoing obligations. This cost-analysis is on file with the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council staff and the Land Trust shares a new version with the Council whenever updates are made.

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	60	283	0	0	343
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	20	77	0	0	97
Protect in Easement	100	450	0	0	550
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	180	810	0	0	990

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	0
Enhance	0
Total	0

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	\$662,700	\$3,125,700	\$0	\$0	\$3,788,400
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$220,900	\$850,400	\$0	\$0	\$1,071,300
Protect in Easement	\$2,375,600	\$2,375,600	\$0	\$0	\$4,751,200
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$3,259,200	\$6,351,700	\$0	\$0	\$9,610,900

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	343	0	343
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	97	0	97
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	550	0	550
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	990	0	990

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	\$3,788,400	\$0	\$3,788,400
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,071,300	\$0	\$1,071,300
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,751,200	\$0	\$4,751,200
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$9,610,900	\$0	\$9,610,900

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	\$11,045	\$11,045	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$11,045	\$11,044	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$23,756	\$5,279	\$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	\$11,045	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$11,044	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$8,639	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Automatic system calculation / not entered by managers

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:

The HLACP will prioritize acquired or eased lands by identifying prairie farmland with numerous restorable wetlands adjacent to existing public and protected lands. The HLWD Conservation Technician, with support from partners, will complete outreach in identified focus areas buffering existing public and protected lands with high potential for wetland restoration. These tracts are likely to have provided little farming income the last few years due to historical flooding within the watershed. Due to the significant historical conversion of prairie wetlands within the watershed (<1% remain) we will utilize the USFWS Restorable Wetland Duck Production Model and numerous conservation plans to prioritize identified tracts. Once specific parcels and willing landowners have been identified, tracts will be scrutinized further according to wetland restoration potential and feasibility, size of tract, condition of existing habitat, acquisition and restoration expense, partner interest, and MN DNR and USFWS interest. The ultimate objective is to identify tracts in which protection and restoration can provide the highest wildlife habitat and public value within the watershed while providing downstream habitat benefits to Heron Lake itself.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Jackson

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Heron Lake TWP WPA Tract	10336231	80	\$640,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Heron Lake WMA Tracts 16A & B	10437232	144	\$1,150,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Hunter TWP WPA Tract	10236206	68	\$544,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Libra WMA - Tract 2	10441202	80	\$640,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Oxbow WMA	10438235	174	\$1,300,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Oxbow WMA Tract 12A	10438231	150	\$1,200,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Oxbow WMA Tract 27	10438232	29	\$233,600	No	Full	Not Applicable
Rost TWP WPA Tract	10237204	230	\$1,840,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Murray

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wirock WMA TBD	10541213	66	\$528,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

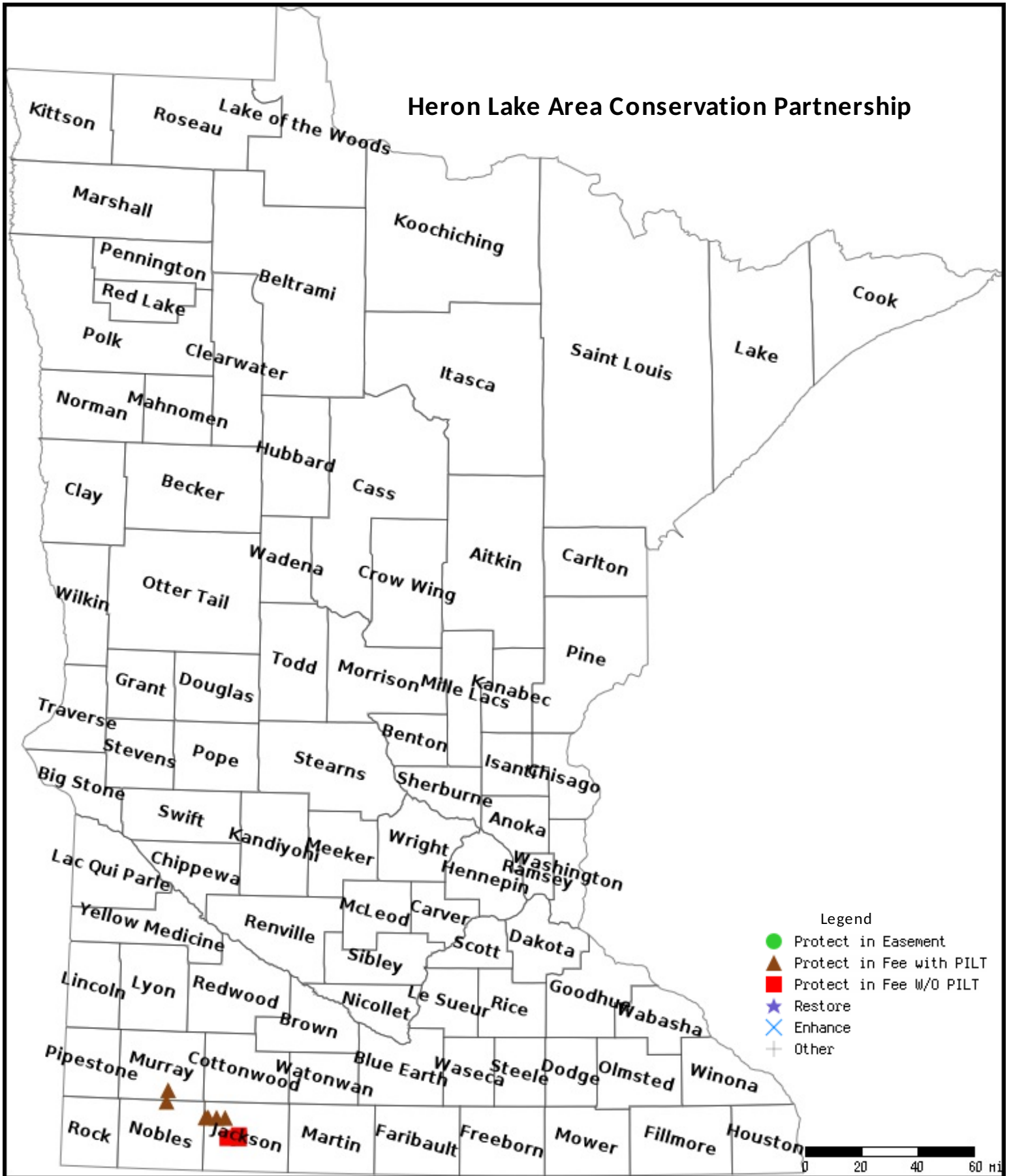
Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map



Data Generated From Parcel List

Heron Lake Area Conservation Partnership

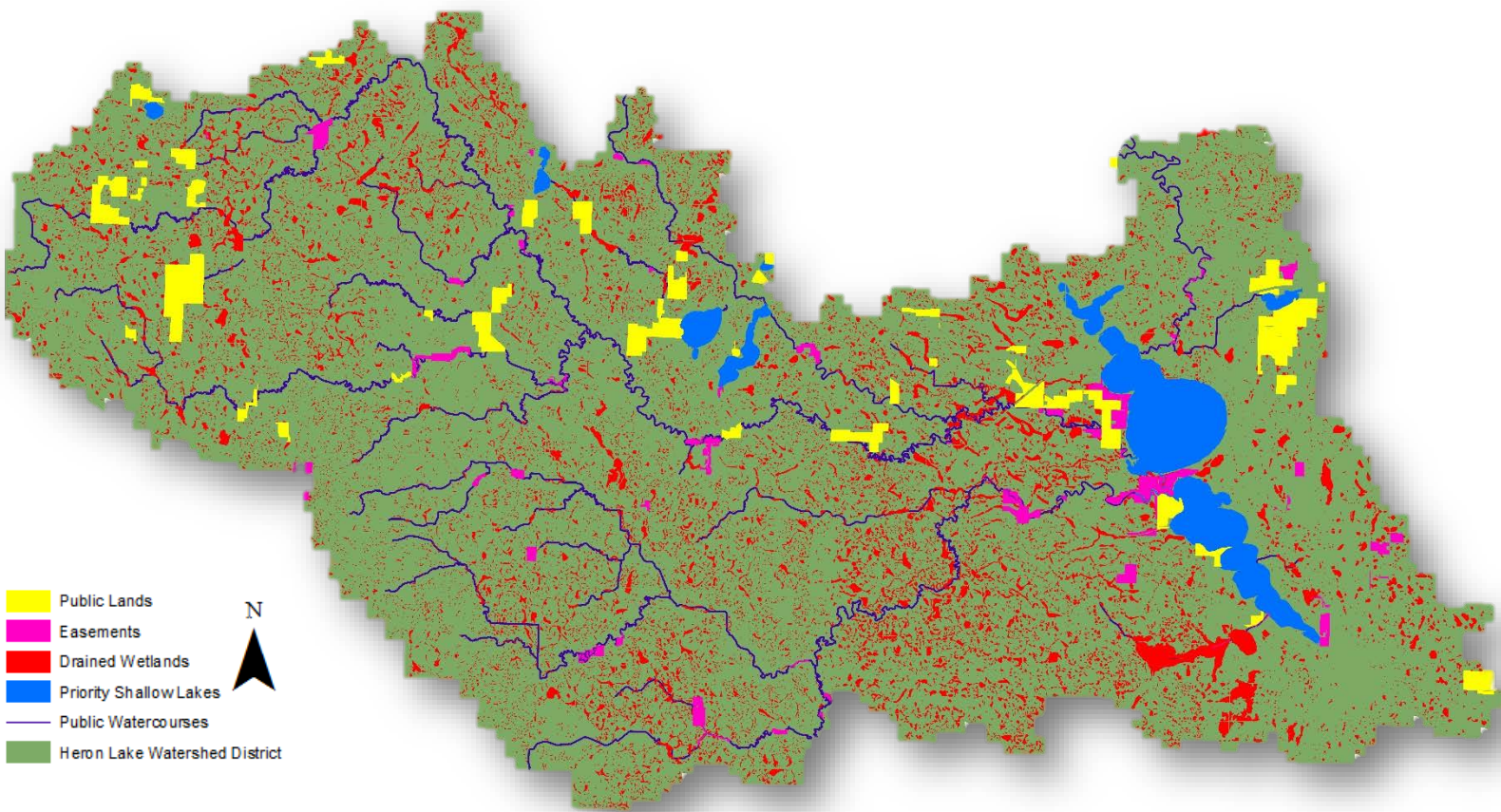


Funding Request: \$9,610,900

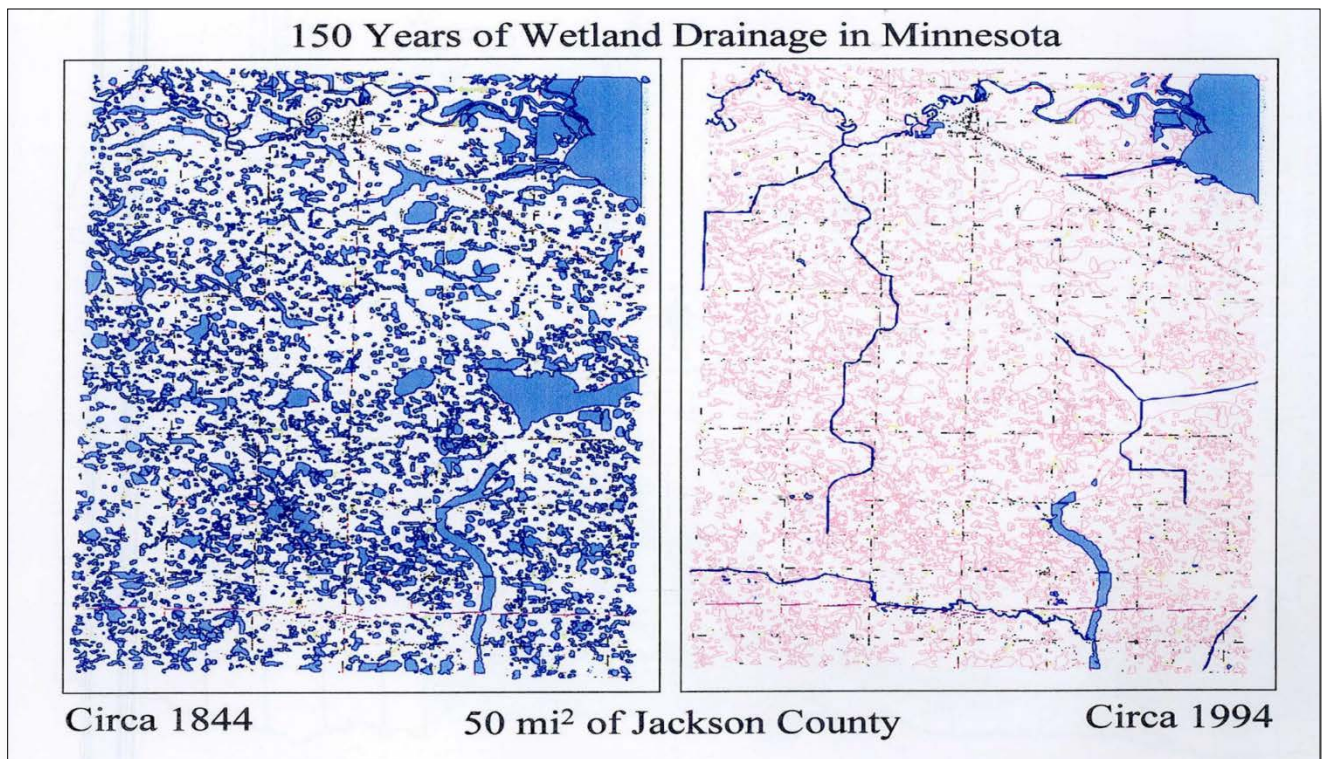
Heron Lake was once a water bird production and migration area of international significance. The vast beds of wild celery and robust stands of bulrush, combined with a seemingly endless prairie around the lake, supported an awe-inspiring number of colonial water birds and migratory waterfowl.

The Heron Lake Area Conservation Partnership (HLACP) will permanently protect prairie and wetland habitat within the Heron Lake Watershed in southwest Minnesota. The HLACP will use conservation easements and fee-title land acquisition to protect and restore 990 acres of high-value wetland and prairie habitat. Tracts will be targeted and prioritized to maximize conservation benefit and financial investment. A Conservation Technician will proactively contact prospective landowners in flood-prone lands and build relationships to develop conservation opportunities.

An increase in the quality and quantity of waterfowl and other wetland wildlife habitat within the Heron Lake watershed is critical. This partnership aims to restore prairie habitat and wetlands, the first concerted effort of this type in many years.



Less than 1% of wetlands remain in the Heron Lake Watershed



This proposal will result in nearly 1,000 acres of protected prairie and wetland habitat



MINNESOTA LAND TRUST

A Decision Support Tool for Prioritizing Conservation Easement Opportunities

The Minnesota Land Trust often employs within its conservation program areas an RFP (Request for Proposals) model to both identify high-quality projects and introduce a level of competition into the easement acquisition process. Below, we briefly discuss how the system works and the framework put in place to sort the varied opportunities that come before us.

How the Ranking System Works

The parcel ranking framework employed through the Minnesota Land Trust's RFP process is intended as a **decision support tool** to aid in identifying, among the slate of landowners submitting bids for conservation easements, the most ecologically significant opportunities for the price. Using this framework, the Land Trust and its partners use an array of weighted data sets tailored to the specific circumstances inherent in a program area to identify those worthy of consideration.

It is important to note that this parcel ranking framework enables the Land Trust to rank projects *relative* to one another. That's important to do, but it's also important to understand how a project (or suite of projects) relates to the ideal situation (i.e., a project that is of exceptional size, condition and superb landscape context). If, for example, an RFP generated 20 proposals in a program area, the framework would effectively sift among them and identify the relatively good from those relatively bad. However, this information alone would not determine whether any of those parcels were of sufficient quality to pursue for protection (all may be of insufficient quality to warrant expenditure of funds). To solve this problem and make sure ranked projects are high priorities for conservation, we step back and evaluate them relative to the ideal - i.e., is each project among the best opportunities for conservation we can expect to find in the program area?

As part of its proposals to LSOHC, the Land Trust included easement sign-up criteria that laid out at a general level the framework utilized by the organization. Below is a more detailed description of the process the Land Trust utilizes in ranking potential parcels relative to one another, and identifying those with which a conservation easement will be pursued. We also include a ranking form illustrating the representative weighting applied to each criteria. These weightings will be refined as we move forward in applying this approach in each program area.

The Framework

We evaluate potential projects based on two primary factors: ecological significance and cost. Both are assessed independent of one another.

Factor 1: Ecological Significance

The Ecological Significance score is determined by looking at 3 subfactors, each weighted equally (as a default). Each of these constitutes 1/3 of the total ecological significance score.

Subfactors:

- **Size or Quantity** – the area of the parcel to be protected (how big is it?), length of shoreline, etc. The bigger the better.
- **Condition or Quality** – the condition of the natural communities and/or target species found on a parcel. The higher quality the better.
- **Landscape Context** – what’s around the parcel, both ecologically and from a protected status standpoint. The more ecologically intact the surrounding landscape the better; the extent to which a parcel builds off of other protected lands to form complexes or corridors, the better.

Note that we have the ability to emphasize one subfactor over another if the specific circumstances warrant it, but we begin with a default standard at the onset. At present, all of our geographies are using the default standard, however because of the amount of hydrological alteration present in the Heron Lake watershed emphasis on restorable wetlands that provide multiple benefits will be a prominent component of the condition subfactor.

Indicators:

A suite of weighted indicators is used to score each parcel relative to each of the above subfactors. Indicators are selected based on their ability to effectively inform the scoring of parcels relative to each of the respective subfactors. Weightings for each criterion are assessed and vetted to ensure that a set of indicators for each subfactor produces meaningful results, then applied across each of the proposed parcels. Finally, we vet and make improvements to the scoring matrix when we identify issues or circumstances where results seem erroneous.

Data sets used for this purpose must offer wall-to-wall coverage across the program area to ensure that bias for or against parcels does not creep into the equation. Where gaps in such coverages exist, we attempt to fill them in to the extent feasible (via field inventory, etc.). Finally, we vet and make improvements to the scoring matrix when we identify issues or circumstances where results seem erroneous.

Factor 2: Cost

Cost is a second major factor used in our consideration of parcels. Although ecological significance is *the* primary factor in determining the merits of a project, our RFP programs also strive to make the greatest conservation impact with the most efficient use of State funds. As such, we look at the overall cost of each project relative to its ecological significance; we also ask landowners to consider donating all or some of their easement value to the cause and to better position their proposals. Many landowners participate in that fashion.

Cost, as a primary factor, is assessed independently of the ecological factors. Given equal ecological significance, a project of lower cost will be elevated over those of higher cost in the ranking. That said, exceptionally high quality projects are likely to be pursued even if no or modest landowner donation is put forward. Alternatively, there are projects offered as full donations that are not moved forward because their ecological significance is not acceptable. The degree to which cost factors into the ranking of parcels relative to one another is made on a case-by-case basis.

HERON LAKE WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet		SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6	SITE 7	SITE 8	SITE 9	SITE 10	SITE 11	SITE 12	Notes
COUNTY														
100 Pts	ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE													
Weighting Factor	Size/Abundance of Habitat (33 points)													
	a) Size (33 pts): Acres of Parcel to be Protected by an Easement													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weighting Factor	Quality of Natural Resources Protected by the Easement (33 points)													
	a) Habitat Quality (28 pts): Quality of Existing Ecological Systems (Terrestrial & Aquatic, as appropriate)													
	b) Imperiled Species (5 pts): Occurrences of Documented Rare Species on Parcel													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weighting Factor	Landscape Context (34 points)													
	Current Status (30 points)													
	a) Protection Context (15 points)													
	i. Size of Contiguous Protected Lands													
	ii. Amount of Protected Lands within 3 miles of Property													
	: Protected Land within 0.5 miles of Property (4 pts)													
	: Protected Land 0.5-3 miles from Property (3 pts)													
	b) Ecological Context (15 points)													
	i. Size of Contiguous Ecological Habitat													
	ii. Amount of Ecological Habitat within 3 miles of Property													
	: Ecological Habitat within 0.5 miles of Property (4 pts)													
	: Ecological Habitat 0.5-3 miles from Property (3 pts)													
	Future Potential (4 points)													
	a) Conservation Plan Context (2 pts)													
	b) Amount of Existing Activity (2 pts)													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL ECOLOGICAL VALUE POINTS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
COST														
	i. Bid amount (\$)/acre	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	ii. Estimated donative value (\$)/acre	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	TOTAL ACQUISITION COST (\$)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

KEY	
	Priority
	Possible
	Out

HERON LAKE WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM

Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet – Scoring and Criteria

Three primary factors when taken together provide a good estimate of long-term viability for biodiversity: 1) **Size** of the occurrence (species population or example of natural community), 2) **Condition** of the occurrence, and 3) its **Landscape context**. This framework is used widely across the world by a large number of conservation organizations and agencies and here in Minnesota by the Minnesota DNR, USFWS, The Nature Conservancy and others. The Minnesota Land Trust has adopted this practice as well.

In this summary document, we provide an overview of the framework used by the Land Trust in assessing and prioritizing land protection opportunities before the organization.

- 1. Habitat Size (33 points):** Parcels are scored based on acres of habitat to be protected through the easement relative to the largest parcels available for protection in the program area. Although size can pertain to species populations, the size of such populations is often constrained by available habitat. In addition, very little information pertaining to the size of species populations on a given property typically exists, making any determination suspect. Habitat size is a valid indicator in these circumstances.

Scoring: Parcels are scored by how they fall relative to twelve size classes of habitat:

0 pt	≤40 acres
3 pts	41-50 acres
6 pts	51-75 acres
9 pts	76-108 acres
12 pts	109-152 acres
15 pts	153-224 acres
18 pts	225-320 acres
21 pts	321-460 acres
27 pts	661-960 acres
30 pts	961-1300 acres
33 pts	>1300 acres

- 2. Quality of Natural Resources (33 points):** Parcels are scored based on the quality or condition of occurrences of ecological communities (habitat) and imperiled species if known. As with Habitat Size above, population data for imperiled species is often minimal on private lands. As such, the condition of score is heavily influenced by the condition of natural communities on a property. However, we do allocate a modest level of points to the presence of imperiled species if they have been documented on a property.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based on the condition of focal ecological community targets – both terrestrial and freshwater – and presence of imperiled species on the property, as such:

- a) Habitat Quality (28 points)** – The Minnesota Biological Survey natural community element occurrence ranking framework (for terrestrial systems) and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency fish and insect indices of biotic integrity are used to score habitat quality on parcels, as such:

- 0 pts Absence of natural communities; fish/insect IBI = 0-10.
- 4 pts Natural communities averaging D rank; fish/insect IBI = 10-20.
- 8 pts Natural communities averaging CD rank; fish/insect IBI = 20-40.
- 12 pts Natural communities averaging C rank; fish/insect IBI = 50-59.
- 16 pts Natural communities averaging BC rank; fish/insect IBI = 60-69.
- 20 pts Natural communities averaging B rank; fish/insect IBI = 70-79.
- 24 pts Natural communities averaging AB rank; IBI = 80-89.
- 28 pts Natural communities averaging A rank; IBI > 90.

b) Imperiled Species (5 points) – Scoring of the parcel is based on species abundance, as follows:

- 1 pt 1 occurrence
- 2 pts 2 occurrences
- 3 pts 3 occurrences
- 5 pts 4 or more occurrences

3. Landscape Context (34 points): Parcels are scored based current ecological context of the property and protected lands surrounding it; in addition, points are also allocated based on the likelihood that lands around a parcel will be protected going forward based on the identification of these adjacent lands in respective conservation lands.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based as follows:

a) Protection Context (15 points) – Is calculated based on two subfactors, including size of contiguous protected land (if any) and amount of protected land within 3 miles of the property. Here, we look at two subfactors:

i) Amount of protected land (acres) contiguous with the parcel. Scoring of the parcel is based on the amount of protected land contiguous to the parcel (8 points), as follows:

- 1 pt ≤40 acres of contiguous protected lands
- 2 pts 41-60 acres
- 3 pts 61-100 acres
- 4 pts 101-160 acres
- 5 pts 161-240 acres
- 6 pts 241-400 acres
- 7 pts 401-640 acres
- 8 pts >640 acres

ii) Amount of protected lands within a 3-mile radius of the parcel, whether contiguous or not (7 points). Blocks of habitat nearby but not contiguous can also play a very significant role in the maintenance of biodiversity over the long term. In this assessment, we weight protected lands within ½ mile of the parcel higher than those farther removed, and score them separately.

(a) Amount (acres) of protected land within ½ mile of protected property (4 points) – The amount of protected land within ½ mile of the parcel, scored as follows:

- 1 pt ≤80 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 81-360 acres
- 3 pts 361-640 acres
- 4 pts >640 acres

Amount (acres) of protected land ½-3 miles of the protected property (3 points) –

- 1 pt ≤640 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 641-2560 acres
- 3 pts >2561 acres

b) Ecological Context (15 points) – As with Protection context, ecological context is calculated based on two subfactors, including size of contiguous ecological habitat (if any) and amount of ecological habitat within 3 miles of the property.

i) Amount of ecological habitat (acres) contiguous with the parcel, providing species with direct access to larger blocks of permanent habitat (8 points). Scoring of the parcel is based on the amount of natural ecological habitat contiguous to the parcel, as follows:

- 1 pt ≤80 acres of contiguous habitat
- 2 pts 81-320 acres
- 3 pts 321-640 acres
- 4 pts 641-960 acres
- 5 pts 961-1920 acres
- 6 pts 1921-3840 acres
- 7 pts 3841-7680 acres
- 8 pts >7680 acres

ii) Amount of protected lands within a 3-mile radius of the parcel, whether contiguous or not (7 points). Blocks of habitat nearby, whether contiguous or not play a very significant role in the maintenance of biodiversity over the long term. In this assessment, we weight ecological habitat within ½ mile of the parcel higher than that farther removed, and score them separately.

Amount (acres) of protected land within ½ mile of protected property (4 points) – The amount of protected land within ½ mile of the parcel, scored as follows:

- 1 pt ≤80 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 81-360 acres
- 3 pts 361-640 acres
- 4 pts >640 acres

Amount (acres) of protected land ½-3 miles of the protected property (3 points) –

- 1 pt ≤640 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 641-2560 acres
- 3 pts >2561 acres

c) Future Potential (4 points) – The degree to which the area within which a parcel lies has been identified as a priority for conservation action and the degree to which action is being implemented in that area is a direct indicator of the long-term potential for maintenance of biodiversity associated with a parcel. Lands affiliated with priority areas are more likely to be complemented with additional levels of nearby protected lands than those outside of priority areas. In areas experiencing high levels of development, this factor may carry a significant amount of weight in setting protection priorities.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based on two subfactors: 1) their position relative to priority areas identified in statewide or local planning efforts, and 2) the degree to which action is being implemented within a priority area.

- 0 pts Parcel not within priority area
- 1 pt Parcel within priority area; minimal activity occurring
- 2 pts Parcel within priority area; modest activity occurring
- 3 pts Parcel within priority area; good levels of activity occurring
- 4 pts Parcel within priority area; high levels of activity occurring



WATERSHED
ASSISTANCE
THROUGH
EDUCATION &
RESOURCES

HERON LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT

Heron Lake Watershed District

PO Box 345, Heron Lake, MN 56137

507-793-2462

Email: jvoit@hlwdonline.org

Web: www.hlwdonline.org

May 21, 2019

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
State Office Building, Room 95
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council:

The Heron Lake Watershed District (HLWD) is pleased to submit the Heron Lake Area Conservation Partnership proposal. Through this endeavor, the HLWD, in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Minnesota Land Trust, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service Private Lands Program, will permanently protect and restore 990 acres of prairie and wetlands adjacent to existing public and protected land complexes. We will also hire a Conservation Technician who would work directly with landowners in targeted, priority areas of the watershed, as well as assist partners with the coordination and implementation of restoration activities.

North and South Heron Lakes were once nationally recognized as migratory waterfowl habitat for over 700,000 staging canvasbacks, 50,000 nesting Franklin's gulls, and large numbers of other birds. Today the lake is primarily used by smaller flocks of mallards and other puddle ducks, mainly for refuge during migration.

The Heron Lake Watershed has undergone significant transformation over the decades. Wetlands were drained, streams were channelized, and croplands replaced prairie grasses and wetlands for modern agricultural production. As towns within the watershed grew, so did their contribution to loss of habitat and degraded plant and animal communities. As a result, less than one percent of the wetlands within the Heron Lake Watershed remain.

The HLWD realizes that having a Conservation Technician working directly with watershed landowners is the best way to target priority areas for wetland and habitat restoration. This person will also assist partners with coordinating and implementing restoration activities. The HLWD will provide \$3,300 toward hiring a staff person for these undertakings. We will also commit \$7,500 in staff time for grant administration.

The HLWD looks forward to the Heron Lake Area Conservation Partnership and its critical endeavor to protect, enhance, and restore 990 acres of high-value wetland habitat and prairie.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bruce Leinen
President



Nobles Soil and Water Conservation District

1567 McMillan Street, Suite 3

Worthington, MN 56187

Phone: 507-376-9150

www.noblesswcd.org

May 22, 2019

TO: Heron Lake Watershed District

RE: Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council grant application

The Nobles County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) supports the Heron Lake Area Conservation Partnership (HLACP) application to restore wetlands and habitat within the Heron Lake Watershed. Multiple benefit projects such as this are definitely needed in the watershed.

Actions in the Heron Lake Watershed District's Watershed Management Plan include "identify locations of degraded wetlands and opportunities for restoration and encourage landowners to restore wetlands for beneficial values associated with wetlands." Most of the wetlands and prairie within the Heron Lake Watershed have been eliminated. The public wildlife lands that do exist are small and the habitat provided is minimal compared to what is needed.

Having a staff person working on outreach to landowners within priority areas of the watershed for wetland and habitat restoration is a key component of this proposal. Enhancing or restoring wetlands and upland habitat will be extremely beneficial for migratory waterfowl, other migratory species, and wetland-dependent wildlife.

Nobles County SWCD looks forward to the work that would be undertaken through the HLACP. We thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Paul Langseth
Chairman
Nobles SWCD



NHLGPA
North Heron Lake Game
Producers Association

May 20, 2019

TO: Heron Lake Watershed District

RE: Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council grant application

The North Heron Lake Game Producers Association (NHLGPA) supports the Heron Lake Area Conservation Partnership application to restore wetlands and habitat within the Heron Lake Watershed. Projects of this type are desperately needed.

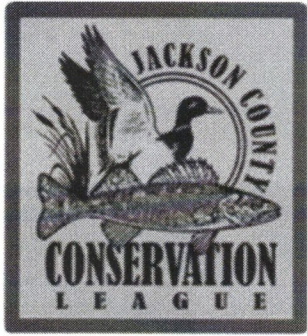
Most of the wetlands and prairie within the Heron Lake Watershed are gone. The public wildlife lands that do exist are small and the habitat provided is minimal compared to what is needed. Enhancing or restoring wetlands and upland habitat will be extremely beneficial for migratory waterfowl, other migratory species, and wetland-dependent wildlife.

Having a staff person working on outreach to landowners within priority areas of the watershed for wetland and habitat restoration is a key component of this proposal. NHLGPA will commit \$3,300 toward hiring a Conservation Technician.

NHLGPA looks forward to working with the Heron Lake Watershed District in this effort to restore wetlands and improve habitat.

Sincerely,

Joel Hovland, President of NHLGPA



Jackson County Conservation League
305 Chicago St.
Lakefield, MN 56150

May 23, 2019

TO: Heron Lake Watershed District

RE: Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council grant application

The Jackson County Conservation League (JCCL) supports the Heron Lake Area Conservation Partnership (HLACP) application to restore wetlands and habitat within the Heron Lake Watershed. Projects of this type are desperately needed.

Most of the wetlands and prairie within the Heron Lake Watershed are gone. The public wildlife lands that do exist are small and the habitat provided is minimal compared to what is needed. Enhancing or restoring wetlands and upland habitat will be extremely beneficial for migratory waterfowl, other migratory species, and wetland-dependent wildlife.

There would be a huge benefit to habitat restoration efforts by HLACP having a technician on staff. Through outreach to landowners within priority areas of the watershed, HLACP would have a positive impact on habitat for many generations.

JCCL looks forward to working with the Heron Lake Watershed District in this effort to restore wetlands and improve habitat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevan T. Vancura", is written over a horizontal line.

Kevan T. Vancura