

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Action Agenda Item Memo

DATE: December 12, 2013

SUBJECT: 25 year Framework and Call for Requests Review

PRESENTER: Charlie Peterson

Background:

A group of conservation professionals, who had advised the council on the development of the 25 Year Framework for the Outdoor Heritage Fund, were invited to participate in a facilitated discussion on Nov. 20, 2013. Advisory group members reviewed the first five years' of appropriations from the Outdoor Heritage Fund and commented on the Call for Funding Requests. The overall themes and meeting notes from that meeting are attached for members' review.

Motion:

No motion suggested.

Suggested Procedure:

After presentation, members, and discuss themes and pose questions to facilitator. Any conclusion or findings should be incorporated into revised call schedule to be discussed at the Council's January meeting.

Agenda Item: 10

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Outdoor Heritage Fund 25 Year Framework and Call for Requests Review

Conservation Leaders Discussion held on November 20, 2013

Background

Fourteen conservation leaders from government and academic institutions affiliated with the development of the original Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) plan, were contacted to participate in a discussion on the resulting recommendations to-date and the process that developed those recommendations. Participants reviewed, by project, 5 years of appropriations from the OHF and the key concepts that govern the recommendations guiding those appropriations. Eleven people responded either by attending the discussion or responding to questions by e-mail. The attendees and questions are attached.

Overall themes

General

The participants recognized that the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council's Call for Requests provides a framework and structure producing quality recommendations on projects for use of the Outdoor Heritage Funds. Participants suggested minor improvements regarding technical assistance to applicants and clarity in the Call.

Trends that impact habitat in Minnesota

- The use of more land for agricultural purposes and away from habitat
- Unclear Federal farm policy that allows for expansion
- Impact of climate change on habitat
- Business effects of the economic downturn (i.e. less timber harvested leading to an imbalance in forests habitat)
- Increasing land values creates higher cost of land for purchase
- Recognition that water quality is a key component in habitat
- The habitat changes resulting from invasive species spread – known and unknown

Outdoor heritage projects that have greatest impact

- As a minimum, projects that meet the needs identified; needs identified in policy, set by the Council, and/or outlined in the application
- Projects that protect scarce habitat
- Large, ongoing, multi-faceted and visible projects; programs that focus on OHF objectives, pursued year-after-year, yielding results – able to see the outcome
- Projects that use partnerships and/or collaborations to leverage resources
- Projects that are targeted toward a specific goal or area
- Projects that provide quick wins – willing sellers and/or favorable prices

What works with process and Call

- The Call provides the framework for projects; from broad principles to specifics on what to do
- The use of the small grant option and process for certain projects

- A focus toward partnerships and collaboration in undertaking the project
- Use of local connections on projects

Challenges with process and Call

- Participants need more technical help – from application process thru developing partnerships for implementing
- Not enough local capacity to develop an application
- Some communities do not see value in projects (for all the work it takes)
- The Call is cumbersome and overwhelming

Options to improve process and Call

- Hold conferences to provide technical assistance and help build partnerships for applicants
 - Hold statewide conference annually
 - Hold local or regional conferences more frequent
- Initiate a roundtable discussion of trends that LSOHC should consider in deliberations on projects; hold every 2 years; review and evaluate prior to hearings on proposals; builds awareness for all parties
- Focus on habitat protection
- Make process and Call easier to navigate but proceed with caution
 - Provide clarity in the Call so easier to navigate for entities without expertise and/or staff
 - Maintain wide option to hear as many proposals as possible; prioritization may limit this

Participants: Alan Ek, Professor, Dept of Forest Resources, UMN Twin Cities; Mark Oja, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Jim Leach, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Tim Larson, Pollution Control Agency; Ed Boggess, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Rob Sip, Minnesota Department of Agriculture; Dave Zumeta and Lindberg Ekola, Minnesota Forest Resources Council; Mike Kilgore, University of Minnesota; David Hartwell, LSOHC; Bill Becker, LSOHC staff

Discussion Questions

1. In your opinion, what projects or types of projects have had the greatest impact on Minnesota's habitat? What made them successful?
2. What was helpful in the LSOHC process and/or Call for Requests in encouraging projects and getting them through the process? What is working with the process and Call?
3. Do you feel aspects of the Call hinder good projects from being requested or selected? What is not working or confusing in the process or Call?
4. Thinking about the Call and/or process, what can be done to improve the outcome? Focus on habitat protection, restoration or enhancement.
5. What trends or growing issues do you see impacting habitat conservation and/or the work of the Council? Which are positive? Which are negative impacts? Which are most important or impactful?
6. How can the process and/or Call be improved to address these trends?