

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council – 2013 25 Year Framework and Call for Requests Interview Summary

September 20, 2013

Background

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (Council) is interested in reviewing the 25 Year Framework developed in 2010 and the annual Call for Requests. During August and early September, thirteen interviews of Council members and staff were conducted. See questions attached. The following is a summary of the themes from those interviews.

Overview

In broad terms for the Framework, the Call and the environment they operate in, the following themes emerged from the interviews.

1. How has the Framework helped the Council accomplish its mission?

Responses included:

- Doing the Framework was a starting point – a baseline to see where we have been; something to **measure** against
- Overall guidance to members and applicants; allows us/them to understand what to accomplish
- Developed state and regional visions and priorities

2. Does the Council's Call for Request yield the best proposals for recommendation to the Legislature?

Responses included:

- Yes – if it is not broken, don't fix it
- In general yes, but the Call needs to be shorter
- Primarily yes with a few no, **clarity/clarification** is needed
 - In the Call document and process
 - In the what the Call and Council are trying to achieve

3. What trends or growing issues (positive and negative) do you see affecting habitat conservation?

Responses included:

- Marketplace of ideas
- Federal farm policy; farm bill
- Invasive species; policy to deal with invasives
- Land values; cost and opportunity to acquire land
- Climate change and its impact on the land and water
- Fewer hunters
- Loss of the family farm; people moving away from living off the land
- Development around lakes; landowners not taking care of shoreline
- Increasing value of water; value of groundwater and surface water

Themes from interviews

Framework

As part of the enabling legislation, the Council was required to develop and provide to the Legislative Coordinating Commission “a 25-year framework of funding, consistent with statutory and constitutional requirements.” The Framework is a historical document and as stated by Council members during the interviews helped create a foundation for their work. No additional themes from those identified earlier were noted.

Call for Requests

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Call for Requests generates applications which the uses Council to develop its recommendations to the Legislature. Interviewees were asked what was confusing or not working with the Call, and they were asked if they would change anything with the Call. The Call was a focus for the interview and generated the majority of the themes. They are grouped under the overall theme headings identified earlier. The emergent themes include:

1) **If it is not broken, don’t fix it**

Usually, a few things that could be fixed in the Call followed this comment. Those comments have been place under the next two themes. The only sub-theme that could come here (while never stated in an interview) would be “proceed with caution.”

2) **The Call needs to be shorter**

Interview comments included:

- a) Make the call more sleek; it’s too long, make it more concise
- b) Leave in principles and statewide priority criteria, move and reference/link Ecological Sections to web

3) **Clarity/Clarification for Call**

a) **Clarify Call document and process**

Generally, interviewees noted that the overall process works (call – applications – scoring – testimony – allocations – bill language, etc.) and a lot of good work is being done. However, they had suggestions to improve or strengthen the Call document and/or process.

Interview comments included:

- i) Develop measures for use by Council and applicants; focus on outcome measures – to both show progress and compare proposals
Measurement options suggested:
 - (1) Measures that show the impact of our work; outcome measures that show that projects protect, restore and enhance
 - (2) Measures that provide a measure of accountability; for example, cost information – cost overhead, cost per acre, etc.
- ii) Council to prioritize criteria in order of importance and use to evaluate proposals
Existing lists mentioned for possible prioritization:
 - (1) Statewide criteria
 - (2) Regional priorities
 - (3) Ecological regions
 - (4) Geographic or project areas; for example, target projects or areas to have an impact, rather than the current shotgun approach, do a demonstration project(s) in one area to

- show what impact there can be in a watershed;
- iii) Align criteria and priority actions with proposal requirement and application assessment tool; it is confusing to applicants in developing their proposal and to Council members in reviewing and scoring the proposals.
- iv) Refine the Call timing or timeline
 - (1) Develop a chart to better show timeline including start times and end times; something visual
 - (2) Lengthen the time to submit proposals beyond the current 60 days; more time to be creative and/or to gather partners
 - (3) Allow more time for proposal presentations; ultimately what is needed is time for Council members reflection between proposals – don't need much more time
 - (4) Option to encourage a 1 or 2 year funding cycle depending on outcome of project
- v) Alter the Council's scoring of applications
 - (1) Initial scoring should be on a pass/fail basis or grade rather than a number from one to 100; those projects that get a failing or low grade (D, F) are not heard
 - (2) Develop a more detailed score during the presentation; interviewees noted they could score the proposal better after they heard the presentation and could ask or listen to questions and responses; develop a scoring sheet to use during the presentation process
 - (3) Use prioritized criteria in scoring of projects (See 3, a. ii); use criteria in prioritized order with weighted average to score proposals
 - (4) Add a subjective or "gut level" score to the process; some way to identify those projects that you just feel will make a difference
- vi) Applicants can either package their proposal with other similar proposals or submit them individually, not both

b) Clarify what the Call and Council are trying to achieve

Interviewees identified a few areas to improve that focused more on what they wanted the Call or process to achieve. The comments were generally board, with frequent follow-ups on not knowing how to make the idea happen. Interviewee comments included:

- i) Improving and/or stressing collaborations
 - (1) Leveraging funds
 - (2) Source of funds
 - (a) State funds; for example, Clean Water Legacy Fund
 - (b) Local funds; for example, local unit of governments, local organizations or private funds
 - (3) Requirement of matching funds; matching funds from local communities
 - (4) Participants in project; local community participants to build local capacity and buy-in
- ii) Place a premium on innovation and creativity, not just a funding stream
 - (1) Council recommendations for projects that are progressive, long-term, one-time investments
 - (2) Targeted approach rather than a shotgun approach; for example, geographic option mentioned earlier
- iii) Determine/define how we know we are making a difference; what is the Council's or Outdoor Heritage Funds impact
 - (1) What are we using to measure our success, what are the critical outcomes
 - (2) Signs are supposed to be placed at projects, have not seen any yet

c) Other suggestions or items to clarify in Call

Interviewees noted a series of items to consider when updating the Call. They include:

- i) Definition section in the call; define key terms so there is no confusion
- ii) Include a request for a map or maps, when appropriate, in the Call; request that proposals include adjoining land use maps
- iii) FAQ section in Call of most common questions
- iv) Do an annual or biennial evaluation of the process and recommendations; another interviewee provided a counter argument: “If money is not going to habitat, money is not well spent.”
- v) Make the Ecological Sections more succinct; another interviewee provided a counter argument: “Don’t touch the Ecological Sections!”
- vi) When purchasing an easement, consider also the cost of maintenance on that land and the loss of tax revenue (usually to local governments); allocate funds that include the easement cost, ongoing maintenance of the land and some reimbursement for loss of tax revenue

Responses to additional questions asked

Questions were asked during the interview dealing with whom the Call is not reaching and thereby what potential entities could also be submitting proposals. Additionally, interviewees were asked how the Call can be changed to reach these organizations and people.

Interviewees were asked about the creation of a stakeholder panel to review the Call and what key questions should be asked. Further, they were asked to identify a way to gain the public input or point of view – in lieu of a stakeholder panel – including what to ask participants with this option.

Entities who are not being reached by the Call

A common initial response is captured by this interviewee’s comment: “We are getting good projects and notice that people keep showing up to present their ideas, and some people keep coming back. I’m wondering who else has good ideas?”

Interviewee comments include:

- Tribes; few, if any, have applied
- Local governmental units – some have, but the breadth of county and townships have not applied or received funding
- Smaller organizations or communities that could partner together – or with a larger organization – to make the \$400,000 threshold
- Organizations whose projects may meet the threshold but do not have the professional grant writing staff; applicants need professional staff to write this level of application

Options on how to reach these organizations

Interviewee comments include:

- Marketing or public relations campaign across the state, focusing specifically on the entities mentioned above
- Market to or contact leadership of local governmental units and organizations about the fund and how they can benefit; focus on county commissioners and township boards, not staff
- Identify on the Council’s website who to contact or provide a list of contacts who can assist in writing applications
- Identify on the website who to contact or provide a list of contacts to help package small projects together so they reach the threshold level
- Start to place signs for projects to show what and where things have been done

- Press releases to news organizations in Greater Minnesota on Lessard-Sams – what it is, what it does, how they can get involved, etc.
- Greater use of social media to tell our story

Gathering additional input – stakeholder panel option

Interview suggestions include:

- People that will provide a wide diversity of opinions
- Those who have received funding: DNR, BWSR, Duck Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, etc.
- Those who have applied but not received funding
- Funded project implementers
- Tribes
- Non-profits: Trust for Public Lands, Nature Conservancy, Conservation Fund, etc.
- LSOHC founders and/or initial Council members
- County commissioners and township board members; associations
- Business leaders
- Scientific panel of environmental, economic, land management and agriculture researchers from colleges and U of M
- County judges
- Other states in the upper mid-west

Key questions for stakeholder panel

Interviewee suggestions include:

- What is working in the Call? What is not working? How would they re-design the Call?
- What in the Call limits them – doesn't allow them to tell their story?
- What do they wish we would ask them?
- What do they hope we will not ask them?
- What are the issues or roadblocks to the implementation of their project?
- Who should be sending in applications and are not? Why? How to bring them in?
- How would they evaluate the Council and fund? What would they evaluate the Council and fund against?
- What is the value added of the Council and OHF?

Gathering additional input – public input option

Interview suggestions include:

- The Outdoor Heritage Fund is complex, the LSOHC process is complex and there is a great diversity of knowledge in the public about both of these. How do you reach the key people with this blend of knowledge?
- Use a poll to gather the greatest public input
- Develop input like was done for the 25 Year Framework; include expert panels to discuss and an opportunity for public input afterward
- Gather input from a wide cross section of Minnesotans: professionals, housewives, parents, unions, business, urban, rural, race, culture, etc. What is the scale needed to get this cross-section?
- Use a proxy for population; county judges, business leaders, policy decision makers
- A lot of effort for not much reward; lose public meeting for stakeholder panel

Key questions for public input

Interviewee suggestions include:

- Is what is in the Constitution – what they voted on – being achieved?
- Do they know the work that is being done?
- How is it working? What else needs to happen?
- What should be the critical areas of focus for the fund/Council?
- What is their definition of wildlife?
- What is the value added of the LSOHC/OHF?

Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Member Interviews – 2013 Questions

Background: name, representing, length of time on Council:

1. Minnesota Statute required the creation of a 25-year Framework which was completed in 2010. An appendix in the Framework document outlines Council and Section vision and priorities. How has the Framework (including the vision and priorities) helped the Council accomplish its mission? How has it been helpful to you? What value do you see in the Framework?
2. What, if anything, has happened over the past five years that makes you think differently about the recommendations of the Council?"
3. Next I want to focus on the LSOHC Call for Requests. Does the Council's Call for Request yield the best proposals for recommendation to the Legislature so the Outdoor Heritage Fund can make a difference in the habitat in Minnesota?
4. What works with the Call? How is it helpful? What has confused you or not worked well with the call? Where has it not developed the response you were expecting?
5. What has happened over the past five years that makes you think differently about the Council's annual Call for Requests? What have you/Council learned over this time that can improve the Call?
6. Do you think the Call for Requests is soliciting all the programs and projects suited to achieving the goals of the Outdoor Heritage Fund? If not, who is not being reached? How can the Call be changed to find these people?
7. Thinking about the call and its various parts: what would you change that would improve the recommendations of the Council? What would you not change – that is working well or, if changed, would harm/change the recommendations?
8. What trends or growing issues (positive and negative) do you see impacting habitat conservation? Which are critical/key? How can the Call be better designed to address these trends? What needs to be changed in the Call?
9. If we create a stakeholder panel on the Call for a group interview/focus group, who would you recommend we include? If you could only select one person – who would you recommend and why? What are key questions to ask the stakeholders – what do we want to know from them?
10. Another option for a limited group interview/focus group is to gather public input. What suggestions would you have to gain the public's view point? Who to invite? What do we want to know from them?
11. In what area of questioning above did I not ask the right questions?
12. Any additional comments to add?

Thank you for your thoughts and time.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2015 Call for Funding Request

April 9, 2013

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (L-SOHC) is charged with making annual recommendations to the Minnesota Legislature on appropriations from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF). Through this Call for Funding Requests, the Council is seeking ideas on what to recommend for funding. This request is open to all who want to apply. Successful applicants will:

1. Read and understand L-SOHC's vision for each L-SOHC Section and the Council's priority actions contained in this Call for Funding Requests;
2. Develop a request addressing those priorities;
3. Complete the on-line application form found at <http://www.lsohc.leg.mn/FY2015/index.html> by **4:00 p.m., Central Standard Time, Thursday, June 13, 2013**. A confirmation e-mail of applications will be sent within 48 hours of the closing time;
4. Be available for a formal presentation/hearing and answer questions based on accurate completion of the details you provide;
5. Be recommended for funding by the Council; and
6. Be appropriated funds in the 2014 Minnesota Legislative Session for fiscal year 2015 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015).

“The mission of the Outdoor Heritage Fund, as specified in the state Constitution, is to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests and habitat for fish, game and wildlife.”

The L-SOHC will only consider funding requests that are:

- consistent with the Minnesota Constitution, statute, and state law, and laws on tribal self-governing harvest regulations;
- sure to attain the immediate objectives of the strategic framework and plan for the Outdoor Heritage Fund; and
- priority actions identified by the Council.

The Council currently **estimates approximately \$100 million will be available for appropriation recommendations** from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) in fiscal year 2015 (July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015). This estimate will be revised after November, 2013.

Areas of Emphasis for Fiscal Year 2015 (M.L. 2014)

Programs Protecting Habitat Threatened by Silica Sand Extraction - requests to protect or restore rare or unique habitats or habitat features as identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey or as Species of Greatest Conservation Need, such as goat prairies geographically associated with silica sand deposits.

Programs Protecting, Restoring or Enhancing Fish Habitat Under Unique or Special Threat - requests conserving threatened fish habitat, especially habitat threatened by aquatic invasive species.

Guiding Principles for Outdoor Heritage Fund Recommendation Process

This request for proposals will:

1. Be transparent, understandable, and accessible by the public for input and review;
2. Protect and advance the public interest;
3. Support programs that are grounded in science and reflect “best practices” for resource management;
4. Take into account existing conservation delivery systems;
5. Encourage efficient and effective conservation solutions; and
6. Primarily benefit must be for fish, game, and wildlife.

Statewide Priority Criteria

1. Are ongoing, successful, transparent and accountable programs addressing actions and targets of one or more of the ecological sections.
2. Produce multiple enduring conservation benefits.
3. Leverage effort and/or other funds to supplement any OHF appropriation.
4. Restore or enhance habitat on permanently protected land.
5. Use a science-based strategic planning and evaluation model to guide protection, restoration and enhancement, similar to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service’s Strategic Habitat Conservation model.
6. Address Minnesota landscapes that have historical value to fish and wildlife, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, Minnesota County Biological Survey data, and rare, threatened and endangered species inventories in land and water decisions, as well as long-term or permanent solutions to aquatic invasive species.
7. Provide Minnesotans with greater public access to outdoor environments with hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation opportunities.
8. Ensures activities for “protecting, restoring and enhancing” are coordinated among agencies, non profits and others while doing this important work; provides the most cost-effective use of financial resources; and where possible takes into consideration the value of local outreach, education, and community engagement to sustain project outcomes.
9. Attempts to ensure conservation benefits are broadly distributed across the LSOHC sections.

Proposal Requirements

The L-SOHC will only consider funding requests that:

1. Are consistent with the uses of the OHF as specified in Article XI of the Minnesota Constitution and Minnesota Statutes and Laws, including restrictions on acquisition of lands in the public domain, as required in Minnesota Statutes.
2. Have a process for ensuring transparency and access to information about the project/program in all stages of project/program implementation.
3. Demonstrate significant and enduring resource and/or habitat outcomes.
4. Clearly identify performance measures, and a plan for measuring, evaluating and publicly reporting these outcomes over time.
5. Reflect the best available science regarding resource and/or habitat enhancement, restoration, and protection.
6. Are for a minimum of \$400,000.
7. Seek funding only to supplement (not replace) customary or usual funding sources.
8. Identify funding necessary to fully implement the project/program(s), and have a plan to sustain the resource and/or habitat outcomes specified, including a plan to finance the necessary activities.
9. Limit the state's exposure for additional funding for the project.
10. Where possible and appropriate, use native plant material.
11. Restore or enhance resources only on property under permanent protection of public fee ownership or conservation easement. This includes tribal lands under federal trust arrangements.
12. Acquisitions through easement must be permanent.
13. Agree to not transfer the public interest in OHF fee and/or easement protected land without written approval.
14. Ensure that land acquired in fee with money from the OHF is open to the public taking of fish and game during the open season unless otherwise provided by law.
15. Commit to replace OHF protected resources converted to a use other than that intended in the OHF appropriation with land of at least equal market value that is in a reasonably equivalent location and reasonably equivalent useful conservation purpose.
16. Commit to erect and maintain signage, as outlined in Minnesota Statutes, crediting the OHF with support for protected, restored, or improved resources.
17. Commit to communication standards in Council plan.
18. Proposal must show, if applicable, the easement costs as a percentage of fee acquisition costs for each parcel.

Minimum Screening Qualifications

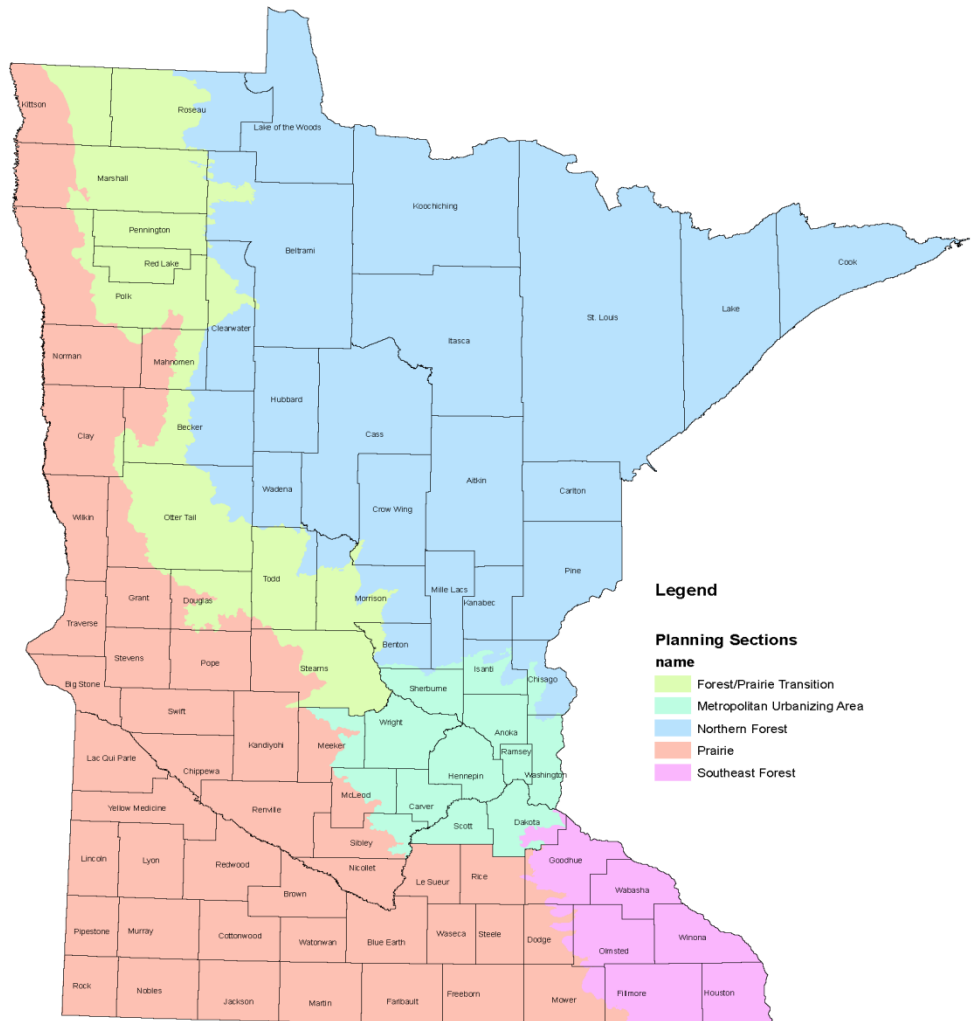
Applicants must:

1. Have a record of successful management and implementation of project/program(s) similar in scale, scope, and complexity to the project/program(s) being requested;
2. Have demonstrated the ability to identify and establish the financial and managerial controls needed to successfully and fully implement the proposed project/program; and
3. Have an up-to-date external financial audit or its equivalent with no serious negative findings.

LSOHC Ecological Sections

Minnesota Law specifies, “The council shall use the regions of the state based upon the ecological regions and sub-regions developed by the Department of Natural Resources and establish objectives for each region and sub-region to achieve the purposes of the fund outlined in the state constitution.”

For purposes of developing the framework that will be used to guide expenditures from the OHF over the next 25 years, the Council has identified five Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Sections (L-SOHC Sections). These are an aggregation of the state’s ten Ecological Sections.



Ecological Section Vision and Priorities

Northern Forest Section Vision

The Council's vision for the Northern Forest Section contains clear view of the desired future condition for the section's forest lands, lakes and wetlands, and wildlife habitat.

Forestland should be universally accessible for forest management purposes as well as protected from development and fragmentation. Private in-holdings in public forests and key properties for habitat and stand management, adjacent to existing ownership should be acquired, with an eye toward ensuring no net loss of forestland. Of special concern is the condition of brushlands within the forestlands. These lands, along with early successional forest habitat are crucial for game species and non-game species and need restoration and enhancement work so as to ensure ample availability of this habitat type.

Lakes and wetlands supporting healthy fish populations are fundamental to the future of the Northern Forest Section. Lakes and streams with protected shoreland and restored watersheds will produce quality warm and cold-water aquatic systems. Those resources will provide the aquatic habitat required to support excellent fish populations and other aquatic organisms.

The Northern Forest Section is home to both cherished and unique Minnesota wildlife populations. It is imperative that the wildlife habitat of this Section support those populations. Healthy wild rice wetlands and shallow lakes that provide important habitat for a wide range of game and non-game wildlife which are clearly front and center in the Council's vision. These and other key habitats are envisioned to protect habitat for endangered, threatened and species of special concern and more common.

Priority Actions for the Northern Forest Section with Examples of Outcome Measures

Priorities actions are not in order of preference or importance.

1. Protect shoreland and watersheds to restore or enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, cold water lakes, streams and rivers, and spawning areas.
 - Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation (*acres protected from development and fragmentation; average size protected complex; acres of forestlands with high connectivity to other forestlands protected*)
 - Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, or special concern species, species in greatest conservation need, and more common species – emphasis on unique species (*Population levels of focal forest game species, focal species in greatest conservation need; number and acreage of native plant communities with high biodiversity significance*)
2. Provide access to manage habitat on landlocked public properties or protect forest land from parcelization and fragmentation through fee acquisition, conservation or access easement.
 - Greater public access for wildlife and outdoors-related recreation (*# of access points, % population with access within distance*)
 - Landlocked public properties are accessible with increased access for land managers (*# of landlocked properties accessed, % decrease in landlocked properties*)
3. 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.
 - Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors (*acres, habitat connectivity*)

4. Restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in aerial extent in recent decades.
 - Improved aquatic habitat indicators (*index of biotic integrity and other aquatic habitat indicators*)
 - Increased availability and improved condition of habitats that have experienced substantial decline (*e.g., acres of pine and brushland*)

Forest/Prairie Transition Section Vision

The Council's future for the Forest/Prairie Transition Section envisions diverse and productive remnant tracts of native prairie, forests grasslands, wetlands, lakes and rivers, and their associated fish and wildlife habitat.

The Council sees a future when ample grasses and other vegetation on shorelands and higher in the watershed keeps water on the land This will yield clean lakes and streams, steady lake and stream levels, and improved aquatic vegetation, providing a plentiful supply of habitat for fish, game and wildlife in the Section, especially habitat for waterfowl and upland birds.

These rivers and streams and their surrounding vegetation will provide corridors of habitat including intact areas of forest cover in the eastern reaches of the Section, and large wetland/upland complexes in the more westerly areas. These wetland/upland complexes will consist of native prairies, restored prairies, quality grasslands and restored shallow lakes and wetlands.

Priority Actions for Forest/Prairie Transition Section with Examples of Outcome Measures

Priorities actions are not in order of preference or importance.

1. Protect, enhance and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and non-game wildlife.
 - Protected, restored, and enhanced aspen parklands and riparian areas (*evidence of successful projects, connectivity of protected habitats, connectivity of forest habitats via corridors*)
 - Wetland/upland complexes will consist of native prairies, restored prairies, quality grasslands, and restored shallow lakes and wetlands (*# and type grassland bird conservation areas protected and restored; average size of complex, grassland and wetland acres; ratio grassland/upland; Increased grass cover %; # protected sites connected via corridor*)
2. Protect, enhance and restore rare native remnant prairie.
 - Wetland/upland complexes will consist of native prairies, restored prairies, quality grasslands, and restored shallow lakes and wetlands (*# and type grassland bird conservation areas protected and restored; average size of complex, grassland and wetland acres; ratio grassland/upland; Increased grass cover %; # protected sites connected via corridor*)
 - Remnant native prairies are part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and large and small wetlands (*Acres/percent of priority prairie wetland complexes protected under conservation management; # and type grassland bird conservation areas protected and restored; average size of complex, grassland and wetland acre (minimum of 40% grass and 20% water in prairie core areas); % and # protected sites connected via corridor*)
3. Protect, enhance and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success.

- Water is kept on the land *(due to abundant grasses and other vegetation on shorelands and higher in the watershed); (#/miles protected floodplain, saturated, and fen wetlands; # protected high gradient stream reaches; evidence of restored natural hydrology)*
- Improved aquatic vegetation *(Evidence of healthy aquatic vegetation, low turbidity)*
- Rivers and streams (and surrounding vegetation) provide corridors of habitat including intact areas of forest cover in the east and large wetland/upland complexes in the west *(Evidence of use in migration, connectivity of protected lands, # and extent of complexes; acres restored riparian vegetation)*
- Increased waterfowl and upland bird migratory and breeding success *(Population levels of focal game species and species in greatest conservation need, # small basins and permanent wetlands, wetlands in high density nesting areas, wetlands with adjacent grassland)*
- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need *(evidence of successful projects, connectivity of protected habitats, # MCBS sites)*

Metro Urbanizing Vision

The Council's vision for the Metropolitan Urbanizing Section is the protection through fee and easement acquisition of a network of natural lands in the Section providing wildlife habitat, birding sites, quality fisheries, especially cold-water fisheries and a forest land base that contributes to the habitat picture.

These natural lands in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Section include complexes of restored and perpetually protected wetlands, prairies, and forests, providing habitat benefits and access. These will have core areas spaced proportionally throughout the section with protected highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities including native prairies. Where possible, the habitats will connect, making corridors for wildlife and species in greatest need of conservation, and hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting. The Section's game lakes will be significant contributors of waterfowl, due to efforts to protect uplands adjacent to game lakes. In the corridors, the streams, rivers and lakes will be protected by vegetative buffers and bank stabilization along riparian areas. Remnant oak savanna will be protected and its health restored, as will forests contributing to quality fisheries. As a result cold-water streams and lakes will provide high quality fisheries within an hour's drive of the majority of the state's population. Where possible, invasive species will have been permanently eradicated.

Priority Action for Metropolitan Urbanizing Area with Example of Outcome Measures

Priorities actions are not in order of preference or importance.

1. Protect, enhance and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity.
 - Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities including native prairies. *(% of 2010 remaining prairie and oak savanna protected, % protected sites that are MCBS sites, % adequately buffered/connected, average size of core complexes, evidence of successful R/E projects)*
 - A forest land base that contributes to the habitat picture *(High quality forests, including oak savanna and Big Woods complexes are restored/protected, evidence of use by species dependent on these habitats, particularly SGCN, evidence of successful watershed approaches...e.g., reduced erosion)*
2. Protect habitat corridors, with emphasis on the Minnesota, Mississippi and St. Croix rivers (bluff to floodplain.)

- A network of natural land habitats will connect, making corridors for wildlife and species in greatest need of conservation (*Corridors connecting protected areas, evidence of SGCN and other wildlife using corridors, acres of “green infrastructure” corridors protected*)
 - Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting. (*# access points, user satisfaction*)
3. Enhance and restore coldwater fisheries systems.
 - High quality aquatic habitat (*streams, rivers and lakes protected by vegetative buffers along riparian areas, aquatic indicators...mussels, fish populations, increased water quality and water on a site*)
 4. Protect, enhance and restore riparian and littoral habitats on lakes to benefit game and non-game fish species.
 - Game lakes are significant contributors of waterfowl, due to efforts to protect uplands adjacent to game lakes (*# impaired lakes, evidence of lake use/success....nesting success, etc.*)

Southeast Forest Section Vision

The Council recognizes the Southeast Forest Section of Minnesota is a unique place, largely untouched by recent glaciers that covered most of Minnesota. The underlying karst geology and overlying remnants of the Big Woods are not found elsewhere in Minnesota. The ages have left a legacy of warm and cold water streams and rivers, floodplains, hardwood forests, remnant bluffland prairies, and striking topographic relief that provides diverse habitat worthy of protection.

In the forested parts of the Southeast Forest Section the Council sees a future of restored and protected oak savanna and mixed deciduous forest lands making up large blocks of protected property, accessible for resource management purposes.

The cold and warm water streams of the region will be protected and enhanced by work in and along streams as well as work streamside to the top of the watershed to slow runoff and keep aquatic habitat clean and productive, with prolific fish, game and wildlife populations.

Southeast Forest Section wildlife habitat will be established in large corridors and complexes of restored and protected, biologically diverse habitat typical of the un-glaciated region. As a result the Section’s endangered or threatened species will find habitat, such as goat prairies, in which to survive, alongside more common species of interest to Minnesotans. The Mississippi River and associated floodplain and bluffs, as well as the feeder streams will be an important part of this network of corridors and complexes.

Priority Actions for Southeast Forest Section with Examples of Outcome Measures

Priorities actions are not in order of preference or importance.

1. Protect forest habitat through acquisition in fee or easement, to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties.
 - Forestlands and savannas are protected from parcelization and fragmentation and accessible for resource management purposes (*acres protected from development and fragmentation, acres of forestlands with high connectivity to other forestlands protected, # landlocked properties accessed, % decrease in landlocked properties*)

2. Protect, enhance and restore habitat for fish, game and non-game wildlife in rivers, cold water streams and associated upland habitat.
 - High priority riparian lands are protected from parcelization and fragmentation (*acres protected*)
 - Stream to bluff habitat restoration and enhancement will keep water on the land to slow runoff and degradation of aquatic habitat (*index of biotic integrity and other aquatic and shoreline habitat indicators, acres of riparian forest, increased water infiltration*)
 - Rivers, streams and surrounding vegetation provide corridors of habitat (*Evidence of use in migration, connectivity of protected lands, # and extent of complexes*)
3. Protect, enhance and restore remnant goat prairies.
 - Remnant goat prairies are perpetually protected (*% of remnant goat prairies protected, evidence of increased goat prairie habitat quality*)
4. Restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in aerial extent in recent decades.
 - Large corridors and complexes of biologically diverse wildlife habitat typical of the unglaciated region are restored and protected (*Connectivity of wildlife habitat, average size protected complex, # and acreage of native plant communities with high biodiversity significance, evidence of migratory success*)
 - Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species (*population levels of focal game species, focal species in greatest conservation need*)

Prairie Section Vision

The Council sees the future of the Prairie Region as vital to the future of waterfowl, grassland birds and other wildlife dependent on native and restored prairies, shallow lakes, wetlands, and grasslands. The prairie region of Minnesota was once home to some of the largest herds of grazing animals the world has ever known. It also contains within its borders, a portion of the Prairie Pothole Region the birthplace of 70 percent of North America's waterfowl. Unique components of this section are the prairie rivers, large and small, from the Red and Minnesota Rivers to their tributaries in adjacent watersheds. This section also contains some of the largest freshwater marshes in North America.

The Prairie Section of Minnesota is now one of the most altered rural landscapes in the world, with 90 percent of its native prairie and wetlands now under plow. The native prairie and wetlands that remain should be perpetually protected. Where possible these remnant native prairies should be part of large complexes with a goal of nine square mile parcels. These parcels should include restored prairies, grasslands, large and small wetlands that will create buffers to the native prairie and provide the density of habitat needed by fish, game and wildlife. Key core parcels should be set aside as areas managed for game species as well as refuges for fish, game or wildlife, and endangered or threatened species. Special emphasis should be put on extremely uncommon Minnesota species with unique or specific habitat requirements.

The Prairie Section waters, affected by agricultural practices which increase run off over natural levels, will have benefitted from revitalized and expanded shoreland buffers and work to enhance shallow lake productivity for a variety of shorebirds and waterfowl. As a result of concentrated work of this type, combined with restored and enhanced upland habitat, historically significant resources for migratory waterfowl, such as the Heron Lake and Swan Lake Watersheds will once again be important landscapes for many species of migrating birds. Likewise the Red River Valley will provide abundant wildlife habitat while simultaneously keeping water on the land to reduce flood potential.

The Prairie Section is the home to a critical portion of the state's wildlife-related lands. The Council sees these being increasingly productive in the future, as the result of restoration and enhancement of native prairie, grassland and associated watershed, including the shallow lakes of this section. In the southeastern part of the Section there are precious remnants of the Big Woods and oak savanna they will also be targeted for protection.

Priority Actions for the Prairie Section and Examples of Outcome Measures

Priorities actions are not in order of preference or importance.

1. Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes.
 - Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife (*acres/percent of priority key parcels protected in fee or permanent easement*)
 - Increased participation of private landowners in habitat projects (*acres habitat P/R/E in private adjacent/near projects*)
 - Improved condition of habitat on public lands (*evidence of successful R/E projects*)
 - Restored and enhanced upland habitat (*evidence of successful restoration/enhancement projects*)
 - Agricultural lands are converted to grasslands to sustain functioning prairie systems. (*Acres/percent of priority key parcels are converted*)
 - Improved access to public lands (*# access points, acres of protected lands open for public access, % population with access within distance*)
 - Water is kept on the land to reduce flood potential and degradation of aquatic habitat (*Watershed yield (indic. in dev.); evidence of restored natural hydrology; #/area/miles of protected floodplain, saturated, and fen wetlands*)
2. Protect, enhance and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests and oak savanna.
 - Protected, enhanced and restored remnants of big woods and oak savanna (*% of large remnants (>500 acres) of big woods and oak savanna protected*)
 - Remnant native prairie and wetlands are perpetually protected and adequately buffered (*Percent of remnant native prairie and wetlands protected, acres of remnant prairies with adequate buffers*)
 - Remnant native prairies are part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and large and small wetlands (*Acres/percent of priority prairie wetland complexes protected under conservation management; # and type grassland bird conservation areas protected and restored; average size of complex, grassland and wetland acre (minimum of 40% grass and 20% water in prairie core areas); % and # protected sites connected via corridor*)
3. Restore or enhance habitat on public lands.
 - Increased wildlife productivity (evidence of increased productivity on specific lands; populations levels of focal game and Species in Greatest Conservation need)
4. Protect, restore and enhance shallow lakes.
 - Protected, restored and enhanced shallow lakes (*% of priority shallow lakes protected, evidence of successful restoration/ enhancement projects*)
 - Improved aquatic vegetation (Evidence healthy aquatic vegetation, low turbidity)
 - Enhanced shallow lake productivity (degree of use by shorebirds and waterfowl)
5. Protect expiring Conservations Reserve Program (CRP) lands.
 - Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife (*Acres/percent of priority key parcels protected in fee or permanent easement*)
6. Protect, enhance and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success.
 - Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species
 - (*degree of fall use of significant resources by migratory waterfowl; evidence of successful projects, connectivity of protected areas via riparian corridors*)

Terms of the Funding

Payment

The expenses must be direct to and necessary for the program or project, as determined by the state’s fiscal agent, and must protect, enhance or restore prairies, wetlands, forests or habitat for fish, game and wildlife. The funds may not be used for general organization support or overhead. Funds may not be used for fundraising from other sources. Funds may be used for planning and evaluating habitat programs or projects paid for with the OHF; however, the evaluation and planning expenses must be direct to and necessary for the program or project, as presented to the Council. For non-state entities, payment is reimbursement for expenses incurred.

Timing

Reimbursable expenses may be incurred on or after July 1, 2014, or the date on which the L-SOHC approves the accomplishment plan, whichever is later. Unless otherwise provided by the legislature during the appropriations process, the funds are available until June 30, 2017, when projects must be completed and final accomplishments reported. Funds for restoration or enhancement are available until June 30, 2019, or four years after the acquisition, whichever is later, in order to complete the restoration and enhancement work. If a project receives federal funds, the time period of the appropriation is extended to equal the availability of federal funding.

Schedule for 2013

- April 8 Call for Funding Request issued
 - June 13, 4:00 p.m. **Deadline:** Call for Requests responses submission deadline
 - August 1 **Council Meeting:** review member ranking and select requests for hearing
 - September 3 & 4* **Council Meeting:** proposal presentations
 - September 11 & 12* **Council Meeting:** possible additional proposal presentations date held
 - September 20* **Council Meeting:** allocation selection meeting
 - November 14* **Council Meeting:** review draft accomplishment plans/preliminary analysis
 - December 12* **Council Meeting:** review appropriation language / final analysis / final bill approval
- * Project managers are asked to attend to provide information*

<p>For more information: Lessard - Sams Outdoor Heritage Council 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. State Office Building, Room 95 St. Paul, MN 55155</p> <p>Email: Isohc@Isohc.leg.mn</p> <p>Phone: (651) 297-7141 Fax: (651) 297-3697</p>	<p>LSOHC Staff</p> <p>Bill Becker, Executive Director 651-296-6397 bill.becker@Isohc.leg.mn</p> <p>Heather Koop, Project Analyst Manager 651-297-7142 heather.koop@Isohc.leg.mn</p> <p>Sandy Smith, Council Assistant 651-297-7141 sandy.smith@Isohc.leg.mn</p>
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