

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

MEMO: Agenda Item #5

DATE: November 5, 2015

SUBJECT: ML2017/FY2018 Review of the Call for Funding Request and Criteria

PRESENTER: LSOHC Staff

Background

In preparation for the ML2017/FY2018 Call for Funding Request, the Council has an opportunity to consider reviewing the Call so that changes or improvements can be incorporated prior to publication in the spring of 2016. Historically, varying levels of changes and/or updates have been made to the Call to reflect Council priorities and current natural resource issues. Moving forward, the Council should ask the questions:

1. Does the Call currently reflect the priorities and vision of the Council?
2. Do Council members feel they receive enough information from proposals to effectively evaluate the proposals?
3. Does the proposal scoring process adequately evaluate the proposals in such a way that members utilize the scores to help in their decision making process for recommending funding allocations?
4. Do the scoring criteria/questions reflect the priorities and vision of the council?

Suggested Procedure

Staff is asking for Council direction on if, and how, they might want to change or improve the Call and its various components prior to publishing the Call.

Attachments: History of Evaluation Criteria, Duties of the Council per the Operating Procedures, ML16/FY17 Call for Funding Requests

History of Evaluation Criteria

FY 2011

Council members answered 3 questions.

- 1) Does the project meet ALL of the minimum criteria (yes/no)
- 2) How does the project meet ALL of the statewide priority criteria? (0-5)
- 3) How does the project meet ALL of the regional priority criteria? (0-5)

FY 2012, FY 2013* (added question 10), FY 2014 (rated on scale of 1-10 instead of 1-5), FY 2015

Councilmembers answered the following questions and rated them each of a scale of 1-5.

- 1) The strategies are clear, effective, and appropriate to the problems outlined
- 2) This is urgent problem needing attention
- 3) The request is well supported by multiple MN conservation plans
- 4) The request is fully grounded in conservation science
- 5) The request effectively addresses one or more relevant LSOHC section proprieties
- 6) The request maximizes leverage and coordination with other funding sources
- 7) The budget supplements the organizations traditional funding sources rather than substitute
- 8) The budget clearly identifies how the OHF money will be used and the level of funding is reasonable for each component
- 9) The request clearly specifies who is responsible for, how, and funding sources for the accomplishments will be sustained and maintained.
- 10) *The stated outcomes are measurable and provide meaningful evaluative data.

FY 2016, FY 2017 – Task force was assigned to review questions (rated on scale of 0-6, total of 72)

1. Does the proposal address priority actions and outcomes of one or more of the ecological sections?
2. Does the proposal address Minnesota habitats that have:
 - a. historical value to fish and wildlife,
 - b. wildlife species of greatest conservation need,
 - c. Minnesota County Biological Survey data, and/or
 - d. rare, threatened and endangered species inventories?
3. Does the proposal explain the nature of the urgency?
4. Does the proposal use a science-based strategic planning and evaluation model?
5. Does the proposal clearly describe whether it leverages effort and/or other funds to supplement any OHF appropriation? For example, leverage may include cash, in-kind contributions such as proposal evaluations or planning, or personnel. Local outreach, education, and community engagement may also be considered advantageous.

6. Does the proposal fully describe and quantify in detail how the requested funding supplements - and does not substitute - customary or usual funding sources?
7. Does the proposal describe how the program's outcomes will be maintained?
8. Does the proposal meet the applicable criteria set forth in MN Statutes 97A.056 Subdivision 13?
9. Does the proposal restore or enhance habitat on permanently protected land, including tribal lands under federal trust arrangements or will the protection be permanent?
10. Does the proposal clearly identify performance measures, and provide a specific plan for measuring, evaluating and publicly reporting these outcomes over time?
11. Is the proposal likely to produce and demonstrate significant and permanent conservation benefits and/or habitat outcomes?
12. Is the proposal's budget within the norms of this kind of work or otherwise adequate to accomplish all goals and objectives described?

Duties of the Council per the Operating Procedures

C. Duties

1. Recommendations: The COUNCIL shall recommend an annual legislative bill for appropriations from the outdoor heritage fund established pursuant to Article XI, Section 15, of the Minnesota Constitution and Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 1:

Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, Subd. 1. Outdoor heritage fund. An outdoor heritage fund, under article XI, section 15, of the Minnesota Constitution, is established as an account in the state treasury. All money earned by the outdoor heritage fund must be credited to the fund. At least 99 percent of the money appropriated from the fund must be expended to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife.

In so doing, the COUNCIL shall consider:

... the outcomes of, including, but not limited to, the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan, that directly relate to the restoration, protection, and enhancement of wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife, and that prevent forest fragmentation, encourage forest consolidation, and expand restored native prairie. (Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 3(a))

The council is directed to establish a conservation partners program, to encourage local conservation efforts, open to local, regional, state, and national organizations. (Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 3(b))

Approval of the recommended legislative bill requires an affirmative vote of nine members of the COUNCIL. (Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 3(b))



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Outdoor Heritage Fund

FY 2017 Call for Funding Request

April 1, 2015

Deadline for Submission: Thursday, June 4, 2015

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) is charged with making annual appropriation recommendations from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) to the Minnesota Legislature. Through this Call for Funding Requests, the Council is seeking habitat programs or projects to recommend for funding.

The Council currently **estimates approximately \$100 million will be available for appropriation recommendations** from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) in fiscal year 2017 (July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017). This estimate may be revised after November, 2015.

The Call for Funding Request is open to all who want to apply.

Successful applicants will:

1. Submit a proposal consistent with the Minnesota Constitution, statute, and state law, and laws on tribal self-governing harvest regulations; including MN Statutes [97A.056](#), and MN Statutes [84.973](#) (Pollinator Habitat Program)
2. Read, understand, and develop a request addressing the LSOHC Ecological Section Vision and Priorities (attached) in this Call for Funding Request;
3. Complete the electronic application form found at www.lsohc.leg.mn/FY2017/index.html by **4:00 p.m., Central Standard Time, Thursday, June 4, 2015**. A confirmation e-mail will be sent to the applicant;
4. Be available to make a formal presentation, testify at meetings, answer questions as necessary and be queried by LSOHC members and staff based on accurate completion of the details provided;
5. Be recommended for funding by the LSOHC; and
6. Be appropriated funds in the 2016 Minnesota Legislative Session beginning fiscal year 2017 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017).

Screening Qualifications

Proposals must:

- Demonstrate a capability to successfully manage and implement the project/program(s) being requested;
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and establish the financial and managerial controls needed to successfully and fully implement the proposed project/program;
- Provide an up-to-date external financial audit or its equivalent of your organization with no serious adverse findings;
- Request a minimum of \$400,000. Proposals less than \$400,000 should be submitted to the Conservation Partners Legacy Program.
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/habitat/cpl/index.html>;
- Be transparent, understandable, and accessible by the public for input and review;
- Protect and advance the public interest;
- Be grounded in science and reflect “best practices” for resource management;
- Take into account existing conservation delivery systems;
- Encourage efficient and effective conservation solutions;
- Be of primary benefit to fish, game, and wildlife;
- Request a realistic monetary amount given the stated scope and timeframe. (Shorter time frames are viewed positively by the Council); and
- Past recipients of Outdoor Heritage Funds must be current with all reporting requirements.

Individual applicants cannot submit multiple requests for funding on the same project. If this is done, the Council reserves the right to reject those proposals.

<p><i>For information and assistance:</i></p> <p>Lessard - Sams Outdoor Heritage Council 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. State Office Building, Room 95 St. Paul, MN 55155</p> <p>Fax: (651) 297-3697</p>	<p><i>LSOHC Staff</i></p> <p>Mark Wm. Johnson, Executive Director 651-296-6397 mark.johnson@lsohc.leg.mn</p> <p>Heather Koop, Assistant Director 651-297-7142 heather.koop@lsohc.leg.mn</p> <p>Sandy Smith, Project Analyst Manager 651-297-7141 sandy.smith@lsohc.leg.mn</p>
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Evaluation Criteria

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council will review and score requests based on the following 12 criteria:

1. Does the proposal address priority actions and outcomes of one or more of the ecological sections?
2. Does the proposal address Minnesota habitats that have:
 - a. historical value to fish and wildlife,
 - b. wildlife species of greatest conservation need,
 - c. Minnesota County Biological Survey data, and/or
 - d. rare, threatened and endangered species inventories?
3. Does the proposal explain the nature of the urgency?
4. Does the proposal use a science-based strategic planning and evaluation model?
5. Does the proposal clearly describe whether it leverages effort and/or other funds to supplement any OHF appropriation? Leverage may include cash, in-kind contributions such as proposal evaluations or planning, or personnel. Local outreach, education, and community engagement may also be considered advantageous.
6. Does the proposal fully describe and quantify in detail how the requested funding supplements - and does not substitute - customary or usual funding sources?
7. Does the proposal describe how the program's outcomes will be maintained?
8. Does the proposal meet the applicable criteria set forth in MN Statutes 97A.056 Subdivision 13?
9. Does the proposal restore or enhance habitat on permanently protected land, including tribal lands under federal trust arrangements and/or will the protection be permanent?
10. Does the proposal clearly identify performance measures, and provide a specific plan for measuring, evaluating and publicly reporting these outcomes over time?
11. Is the proposal likely to produce and demonstrate significant and permanent conservation benefits and/or habitat outcomes?
12. Is the proposal's budget within the norms of this kind of work or otherwise adequate to accomplish all goals and objectives described?

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

Recommendations that come forth from this Call for Funding Request will go before the 2016 Legislature. Reimbursable expenses may be incurred on or after July 1, 2016, or the date on which the LSOHC approves the accomplishment plan, whichever is later. Unless otherwise provided by the legislature during the appropriations process, the funds are available until June 30, 2019 when projects must be completed and final accomplishments reported. Funds for restoration or enhancement are available until June 30, 2021, or five years after an acquisition, whichever is later, in order to complete initial restoration and enhancement work. If a project receives at least 15% of project funds from federal funds, the time period of the appropriation may be extended to equal the availability of federal funding, to a maximum of six years.

Schedule for 2015

** Project managers are asked to attend to provide information*

*** Dates are subject to change, always check the LSOHC website for the current schedule*

April 1, 2015	Call for Funding issued
June 4, 2015	Deadline to submit proposals for the Call for Funding
June 23, 2015	Council Meeting: no new proposals on the agenda
August 11, 2015*	Council Meeting: LSOHC members review proposals / determine hearing selections
September 1-3, 2015*	Council Meeting and proposal hearings
October 6, 2015*	Council Meeting: LSOHC members do initial allocation selection
November 5, 2015*	Council Meeting: Members review draft accomplishment plans with funding recommendation amounts
December 3, 2015*	Council Meeting: final bill adopted to forward to 2016 Legislature

Constitution of the State of Minnesota language that established the Outdoor Heritage Fund

Sec. 15. Outdoor heritage, clean water, parks and trails, and arts and cultural heritage; sales tax dedicated funds.

Beginning July 1, 2009, until June 30, 2034, the sales and use tax rate shall be increased by three-eighths of one percent on sales and uses taxable under the general state sales and use tax law. Receipts from the increase, plus penalties and interest and reduced by any refunds, are dedicated, for the benefit of Minnesotans, to the following funds: ***33 percent of the receipts shall be deposited in the outdoor heritage fund and may be spent only to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife***; 33 percent of the receipts shall be deposited in the clean water fund and may be spent only to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams and to protect groundwater from degradation, and at least five percent of the clean water fund must be spent only to protect drinking water sources; 14.25 percent of the receipts shall be deposited in the parks and trails fund and may be spent only to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance; and 19.75 percent shall be deposited in the arts and cultural heritage fund and may be spent only for arts, arts education, and arts access and to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage. ***An outdoor heritage fund; a parks and trails fund; a clean water fund and a sustainable drinking water account; and an arts and cultural heritage fund are created in the state treasury.*** The money dedicated under this section shall be appropriated by law. ***The dedicated money under this section must supplement traditional sources of funding for these purposes and may not be used as a substitute. Land acquired by fee with money deposited in the outdoor heritage fund under this section must be open to the public taking of fish and game during the open season unless otherwise provided by law.*** If the base of the sales and use tax is changed, the sales and use tax rate in this section may be proportionally adjusted by law to within one-thousandth of one percent in order to provide as close to the same amount of revenue as practicable for each fund as existed before the change to the sales and use tax.

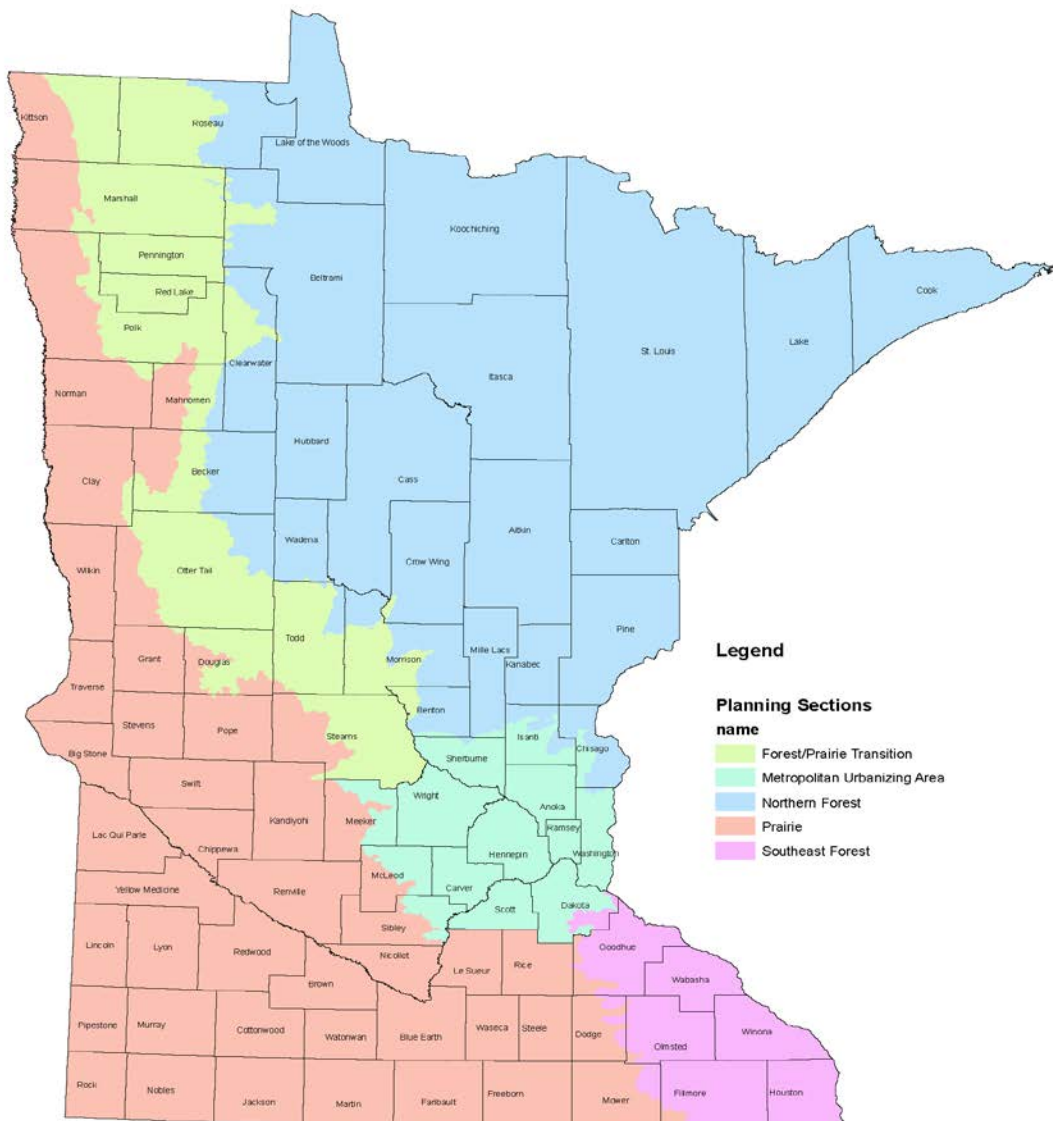
[Adopted, November 4, 2008]

**** Italics added***

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 (LSOHC 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.

- 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*)
- 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*)
- 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*)
- 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*)
- Protect from long term or permanent endangerment from invasive species.

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.

- 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*)
- 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)

- 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*)
- Protect from long term or permanent endangerment from invasive species.

Metro Urbanizing Vision

The Council's vision for the Metropolitan Urbanizing Section is the protection 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 production, 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.

- 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*)
- 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*)
- 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*)
- 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 population, due to efforts to protect uplands adjacent to game lakes (*# impaired lakes, evidence of lake use/success....nesting success, etc.*)
- Protect from long term or permanent endangerment from invasive species.

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.

- 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*)
- 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*)
- 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*)
- 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*)
- Protect from long term or permanent endangerment from invasive species.

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.

- 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*)
- 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*)
- 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)
- 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)
- 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*)
- 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*)
- Protect from long term or permanent endangerment from invasive species.