

Recent DNR conservation officers have completed their training and resumed patrol duties in their newly designated areas. Another CO Academy, which will include 12 to 15 candidates, is in April. **See Page 8**

Seminar Speakers

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rts. The show is Feb. 26-28 at the Fairgrounds. **See Page 24**



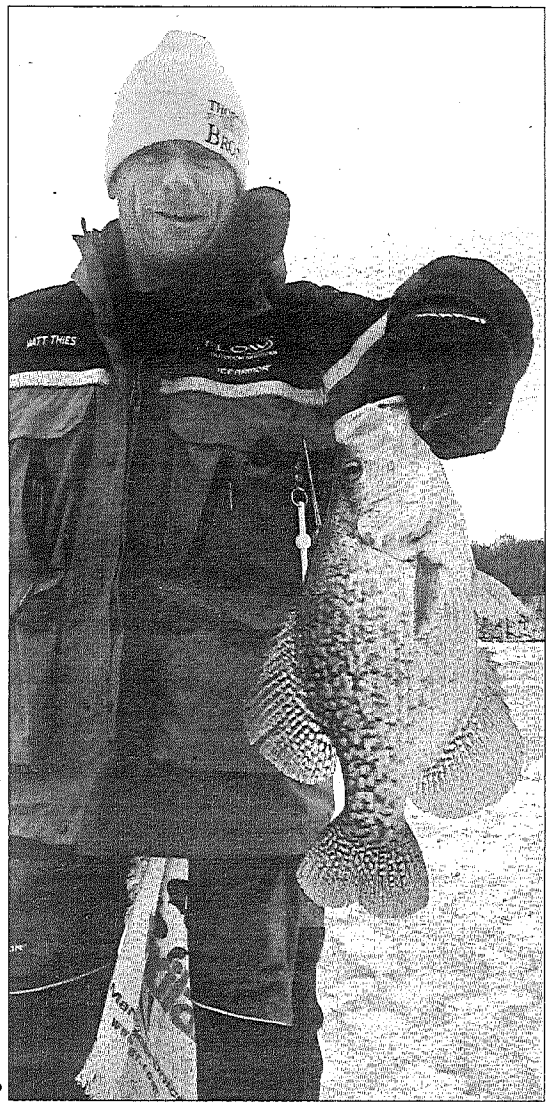
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February 5 2016
Outdoor News

he'd received "threats" that House Republican leaders wouldn't support DNR and Board of Water and Soil Resources' bonding requests related to water quality if private ditches weren't taken off the buffer requirement table.

To which legislators said: They never were on the

(See Buffer Debate Page 35)



METRO CRAPPIE. Matt Thies caught this 17-inch, 3.86-pound crappie Jan. 28 while fishing a metro-area lake.



MIDWINTER PANFISH. While the ice-fishing doldrums tend to occur in February, there are still plenty of opportunities for catching bruiser bluegills. See the fishing report on pages 36-37 for local fishing reports. **Photo by Bill Lindner Photography**

Mille Lacs advisory council members grill DNR officials

Doubt surrounds creels, hooking mortality

By Javier Serna
Assistant Editor
Isle, Minn. — The Mille Lacs Fisheries Advisory Committee questioned Minnesota DNR fisheries personnel about the agency's creel survey data and methodology at its latest meeting held at McQuoid's Inn and Event Center on Jan. 28.

Those data were used to shut down wall-eye fishing on the lake last summer after

state fisheries managers worried too much of Mille Lacs' spawning stock was in danger of dying due to hooking mortality, an assertion widely questioned by many business interests on the committee that rely on the fishery.

(See Mille Lacs Page 42)

Report tracks progress of Heritage Fund

By Joe Albert
Editor
St. Paul — Current projections show the Outdoor Heritage Fund is on track to acquire 717,444 acres of land in Minnesota — via fee title and easement — by the time the Legacy Amendment sunsets in the early 2030s.

That's according to a recently released report, mandated of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council by the Legislature, that documents acquisitions reported complete as of June 30, 2015.

(See Heritage Fund Page 35)

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Feb. 28 — Walleye, sauger, and northern pike fishing seasons end.	

Heritage Fund

(From Page 1)

In its 25-year framework, completed in 2010, the LSOHC estimated the Outdoor Heritage Fund could acquire between 664,000 and 1.5 million acres of land in the state. The Outdoor Heritage Fund takes in 33 percent – about \$100 million per year – of the three-eighths of 1 percent sales tax increase that voters approved in 2008.

To date, the Outdoor Heritage Fund has been used to acquire 42,316 acres via fee-title acquisition – lands that are permanently protected and open to the public – and 226,326 acres in conservation easements, which also are permanently protected.

“Right now, we’re on a trajectory to just barely beat that 664,000-acre estimate,” said Joe Pavelko, LSOHC assistant director. “Unless something changes dramatically, I think we’re going to be on the lower end of those estimates.”

The report doesn’t include all projects for which money to date has been allocated. Grant recipients have three years to complete acquisitions, and restorations may take even longer.

The report isn’t so much a judgment of the success of the Outdoor Heritage Fund to date, but rather a snapshot in time, LSOHC officials say. Rather than figures related to acres acquired, success ultimately will be defined by what the money does for the number of bird

species or nesting pheasants, for example.

“For the most part, it’s been successful so far,” Pavelko said. “But the big thing will be, after 25 years, has there been a landscape change?”

Among the information the report includes is the amount of land acquired in each county. In 17 counties, there hadn’t been a completed fee-title acquisition. And in 32 counties, there hadn’t been a completed easement.

Given the number of years remaining in the life of the Legacy Amendment, and the fact that not all funded projects have been completed, “The Outdoor Heritage Council envisions seeing a more even distribution of acquisitions throughout most of the counties,” Pavelko said.

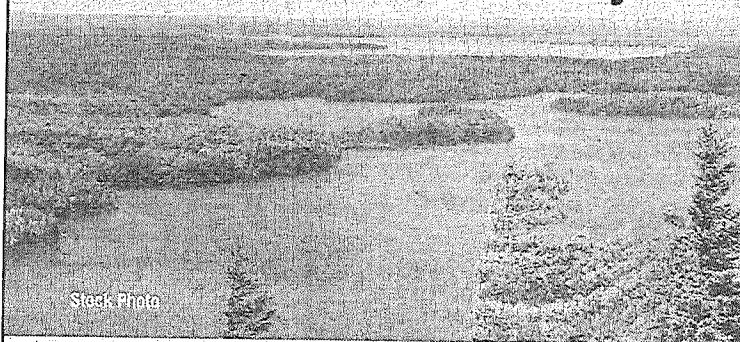
There have been more than 2,000 acres acquired via fee-title acquisition in three counties – Clay, Crow Wing, and Kanabec – and more than 10,000 acres of easements acquired in four counties – Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis.

In 46 counties, fewer than 640 acres have been acquired via fee-title acquisition, and in 43 counties, there have been fewer than 640 acres acquired via easement. One section of land equates to 1 mile by 1 mile, or 640 acres.

Among the other figures contained in the report:

- Of the 42,316 acres acquired thus far, 17,830 are prairie acres; 10,439 are forest acres; 8,890 are

Outdoor Heritage Fund acquisition summary



Fee-title lands bought using Outdoor Heritage funds (for projects reported as complete by June 30, 2015)

Acquisitions: 319

Total acres: 42,316

Total acquisition payment: \$150,379,982

Easements acquired using Outdoor Heritage funds (for projects reported as complete by June 30, 2015)

Easements: 276

Total acres: 226,326

Total easement payment: \$79,972,156

Estimated acquisition 2009-2033

Fee title: 275,833

Easement: 441,611

Total: 717,444

*Information courtesy Lessard-Sams
Outdoor Heritage Council*

wetland acres; and 5,157 are habitat acres.

- Of the 226,326 acres of easements acquired, 212,457 are forest acres; 8,988 are wetland acres; 4,052 are prairie acres; and 828 are habitat acres.

- \$150,379,982 has been spent to acquire land in fee title; \$79,972,156 has been used to purchase easements.

- The highest percentage of a county acquired in fee title is in Kanabec County, where just less than 0.8 percent of the land in the county has been acquired.

- The highest percentage of a county acquired in easement is Itasca County, where 9 percent of the land in the county has been acquired.

- Before acquisition, the estimated average tax for fee-title acquisitions without PILT obligations was \$10.62 per acre; the estimated average tax for fee-title acquisitions with PILT obligation was \$24.21 per acre.

- From 2009 through 2015, the estimated average PILT payment per acre for lands acquired via fee title was \$31.31.

- Through 2015, the PILT obligation on lands acquired from the Outdoor Heritage Fund is \$795,187.

Buffer Debate

(From Page 1)

table.

he views the state’s buffer bill as “nation-leading, great legislation.”

Dayton, however, said he

Minnesota Destinations

Experience
ALBERT LEA
this Summer

“The Land
Between
the Lakes”