



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
The State of Minnesota

State Office Building, Room G95 100 Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

January 14, 2013

The Honorable Paul Thissen
Speaker, House of Representatives
463 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Speaker Thissen,

On behalf of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, it is my honor to present a bill jacketed for introduction incorporating the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council's recommendations for FY 14 appropriations from the outdoor heritage fund, as required by law. This proposed legislation contains the Council's fifth annual appropriation recommendations to protect, enhance, and restore Minnesota's prairies, wetlands, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife which are consistent with and effectively address the Council's strategic statewide and regionally-based conservation and habitat priorities from the Outdoor Heritage Fund's 25-Year Framework.

The council received 39 requests totalling over \$221 million from a cross-section of public and non-profit organizations. The Council's FY 14 recommendations include 29 proposed appropriations with expenditures totaling \$91 million.

The Council's recommendations are consistent with constitutionally-specified uses of the Outdoor Heritage Fund and promise to have lasting and positive impact on the state's natural resource based habitats. The following outputs are associated with these recommendations:

- 25,749 acres of wetlands and wetland systems protected, restored, and enhanced;
- 38,235 acres of prairies and prairie systems protected, restored, and enhanced;
- 3,936 acres of forest protected, restored and enhanced; and
- 28,794 acres of aquatic habitat protected, restored, and enhanced.

Enhancement of public lands accounts for the majority of activity recommended for funding. Over 72,000 acres are to be affected and will improve habitat for a range of species, from duck habitat in the Prairie Pothole region to pheasants in the tall grass regions to trout streams in the southeast and northeast to moose in the boreal forests of northeastern Minnesota. Habitat protection and enhancement activity puts money on the ground by creating and supporting jobs in local economies.

One of the council's largest recommendations, the Reinvest in Minnesota-Wetlands Reserve Program (\$13.39 million) will protect and restore over 6,800 acres of previously drained wetlands. The program has been a national leader in converting marginal farmland to a thriving wetland-upland habitat complex, while providing economic benefit to the private landholder. This recommended appropriation will leverage \$21.4 million in federal funds, bringing a total state and federal investment in the program's wetland restoration goals to \$34.79 million.

The council seeks programs focused on Minnesota's habitat goals and invests in those programs year after year so as to create a lasting habitat heritage for future generations. Several programs focus on the prairie regions of the state are recommended for a fifth year of funding, including the Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area program, the Minnesota Prairie Recovery Project, and the Accelerated Prairie Restoration and Enhancement on DNR Lands. Together, these programs support the work of the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan and will have a powerful impact on prairie and prairie systems. These programs are recommended for a combined total of \$15.49 million and will affect some 31,462 acres.

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council is confident its recommendations will be broadly supported by the citizens of Minnesota. The Council stands prepared to provide any assistance and additional information necessary during the legislative session.

On behalf of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, I thank you for the opportunity to serve the people of Minnesota in improving our state's great outdoors habitat heritage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Hartwell', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Hartwell
Chair, Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

C: Council Members
House Environment Finance Chair, Representative Jean Wagenius
House Environment Policy Chair, Representative David Dill
House Legacy Committee Chair, Representative Phyllis Kahn
Legislative Assistant to the Minority Leader , Urszula Gryska

Attachment: Jacketed bill