



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2017 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 12/08/2021

Project Title: Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program - Phase IX

Funds Recommended: \$5,500,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2017, Ch. 91, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 4(a)

Appropriation Language: \$5,500,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever to acquire land in fee and restore and enhance wetlands and grasslands to be designated and managed as waterfowl production areas in Minnesota, in cooperation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Eran Sandquist

Title: State Coordinator - MN

Organization: Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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Location Information

County Location(s): Swift, Carver, Big Stone, Kandiyohi, Wright, Stevens, Becker, McLeod, Pope, Lac qui Parle, Rice, Douglas, Traverse, Blue Earth, Mahnommen, Jackson, Otter Tail, Renville, Clay, Faribault, Lyon, Brown, Steele, Lincoln, Nobles, Murray and Meeker.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

Narrative**Abstract**

This proposal accelerates the permanent protection of 235 acres of wetlands and 765 acres of grasslands for a total of 1,000 acres as Waterfowl Production Areas open to public hunting in Minnesota.

Design and Scope of Work

The loss of grassland and wetland habitats in Minnesota is well documented. In the agricultural region of Minnesota over 90% of our wetlands and 99% our prairie grasslands have been converted for other uses. Grant funding requested through this project will restore and permanently protect these lands for wildlife and the recreational enjoyment of the visiting public. One of the primary ways to reverse this downward trend is to permanently acquire and restore previously converted wetland and grassland habitats on those properties. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and their partners have been employing this strategy for over 50-years with the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program (SWAP). This ninth phase of the acceleration program acquires and restores 235 acres of wetlands and 765 acres of grassland habitat which will be permanently protected as Waterfowl Production Areas managed by the Service.

Using landscape level planning tools [e.g. Thunderstorm Maps produced by the Service's Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET)], Pheasants Forever (PF) will acquire strategically identified properties. Based on HAPET evaluation strategies, modeling predictions can be made on the numbers of nesting waterfowl, grassland nesting birds, and other wildlife the acres impacted by this grant application can produce. In addition to the obvious wildlife benefits, the lands acquired (once restored) through this grant will provide improved water quality, groundwater recharge, and flood abatement benefits. These strategies are well tested and are supported by the greater conservation community here in Minnesota. Hunting and fishing stakeholders are very interested in increasing opportunities for hunting and fishing public access and have used WPA's extensively in the past. To address concerns related to the erosion of county tax revenues due to public land, the Service and PF will notify counties prior to acquisition of lands. Once acquired, the Service will make a one-time Trust Fund payment to the county where the property is located. In addition, the Service will make annual Refuge Revenue Sharing payments for all fee lands within the respective counties.

Additional funding for restoration and development of the properties will be solicited from partners. If this funding is available, budgeted Outdoor Heritage restoration under this proposal would be able to accomplish additional fee title w/o PILT acquisition funds. Wetlands, on the properties acquired, will be restored by either surface ditch "plugs", breaking sub-surface tile lines or other commonly used wetland restoration strategies. Grasslands will be restored by planting appropriate native grasses and forbs. Grassland restoration on individual tracts may take

three to five years and involve one to two years of post acquisition farming to prepare the seed base, one year for seeding and one to two years to establish. Other restoration activities could include invasive tree removal, building site-cleanup, prescribed fire, etc.

How does the plan address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species?

This strategic acquisition and restoration of lands adjacent to existing prairie wetland complexes will increase the overall size of the habitat complex, reducing edge and tremendously benefiting those species that rely on larger blocks of habitat including the marbled godwit, bobolink, and grasshopper sparrow. Where available protection of remnant native prairie will also be a priority. Once restored these wetland and high diversity grassland complexes will provide habitat for a myriad of species including waterfowl, black terns, bobolinks, meadowlarks, ring-necked pheasants, pollinators and monarchs. Other species of concern benefiting from this project include the prairie chicken, short-eared owl, marsh hawk, and yellow rails.

This project will focus on the restoration of prairie wetland and grassland habitats in western and southern Minnesota. These geographic areas of Minnesota are part of the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR), of North America. The PPR is well known for its waterfowl production potential and importance for grassland nesting birds. Recent studies have documented the conversion of grasslands have caused grassland nesting birds to be in a more severe long-term decline as compared to other groups of birds. The protection and restoration of wetland and grassland habitats will assist in reversing the decline of grassland nesting birds and stabilize waterfowl production in Minnesota.

Describe how the plan uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

This proposal utilizes the best science and modeling available to build or expand corridors and complexes. The Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), located in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, provides landscape level planning and decision support tools (e.g. Thunderstorm maps) used to identify the most important wetland and grassland habitats remaining in the PPR of Minnesota. To scale this large programmatic grant to local landscape level priorities Pheasants Forever works in close collaboration with the local area managers of the MN DNR, USFWS, and other Minnesota partners to build on existing grassland and wetland conservation efforts. This proposal will continue to leverage spatial data and the power of GIS to identify acquisitions based on landscape level priority areas. Preference is given to project sites that help deliver the goals of other recognized conservation initiatives and plans. Data layers (i.e. MN Biological Survey, Natural Heritage Database, MN Prairie Plan, Wellhead Protection Areas, HAPET Scores, Pheasant Action Plan, existing protected land, etc.) will be used to help justify projects and focus areas as well as to inform decisions when allocating scarce dollars for habitat protection, restoration and enhancement. If there are species of concern located on or adjacent to project tracts as identified in the MBS layer we take an extra consideration when developing proposals and this ultimately may change the way we look at and prioritize project tracts. In addition, if there are rare or sensitive species on site we will be able to identify those, communicate with the appropriate long-term land managers, and ensure we're having a positive impact on these species.

Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?

- H1 Protect priority land habitats

- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, enhance, and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

Metro / Urban

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Prairie

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

Does this program include leveraged funding?

-

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
Annual	PF	100,000

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All grant monies received for this project will result in fee title transfers of additional land into the National Wildlife Refuge System. The long-term protection and management of these habitats will be the responsibility of the Service, an agency that employs professional managers, biologists, field staff, realty staff, and enforcement officers and has an annual operating budget designated specifically for the management of refuge resources. Wetlands and their contributing watersheds will be protected and prairie habitats monitored and managed. The Service has an active, professional prescribed burning program and utilizes fire to reduce woody invasion of prairies, enhance diversity, and rejuvenate uplands. Biological, mechanical, and sometimes chemical treatments are used as needed in an integrated management approach to provide high quality migration and breeding habitats. Acquisitions are targeted within areas that have existing Service ownership to reduce management and administrative costs. In addition, great care is given to the creation and acquisition of possible new Waterfowl Production Areas outside existing ownership areas.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Transfer	Federal	Monitoring	Maintenance	Habitat Management

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this program will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056?

Yes

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition?

No

Describe any measures to inform local governments of land acquisition under their jurisdiction:

At minimum we will notify local government in writing of the intent to acquire and donate lands to the Service and follow up with questions prior to acquisition. In cases where there is interest, we will also indicate our willingness to attend or ask to attend county or township meetings to communicate our interest in the projects and seek support.

Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) free of any other permanent protection?

No

Describe the permanent protection and justification for additional protection:

A limited number of the parcels may have a federal or state easement on a portion of the tract which provides permanent protection for wetlands or grasslands. If a parcel has one of these encumbrances, and is still deemed a high priority by the partners, we will follow guidance established by the Outdoor Heritage Fund to proceed, or use non-state funding to acquire the residual value of the protected portion of the property.

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

This proposal may include initial development plans or restoration plans to utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest to prepare the seedbed for native seed planting. In these restorations, PF's policy is to use non neonicotinoid treated seed and no herbicides other than glyphosate.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated?

True

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?

No

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

All acquired lands will be open to the public taking of fish and game during the open season according to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, United States Code, title 16, section 668dd, et seq.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

Department of the Interior

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?

No

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Identify priority acquisitions	07/01/2017
Contract appraisals ordered	09/01/2017
Purchase agreements	02/01/2018
Re-evaluate tract priority	02/14/2018
Contract appraisals ordered	04/01/2018
Purchase agreements	09/01/2018
Close on tracts	01/01/2020
Restoration completed	06/30/2022

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2022

Budget

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$33,400	-	-	\$33,400
Contracts	\$599,200	-	-	\$599,200
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$4,788,000	\$4,200,000	Federal, Private, PF	\$8,988,000
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$900	-	-	\$900
Professional Services	\$65,000	-	-	\$65,000
Direct Support Services	\$7,500	-	-	\$7,500
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$6,000	-	-	\$6,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$5,500,000	\$4,200,000	-	\$9,700,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF Field Staff	0.05	3.0	\$10,600	-	-	\$10,600
PF State Coordinator - MN	0.03	3.0	\$10,500	-	-	\$10,500
PF Grants Staff	0.05	3.0	\$12,300	-	-	\$12,300

Amount of Request: \$5,500,000

Amount of Leverage: \$4,200,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 76.36%

DSS + Personnel: \$40,900

As a % of the total request: 0.74%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?

We have reduced accomplishments/costs proportionately across the overall program to accommodate the reduced appropriation.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Leverage is expected from multiple sources including but not limited to federal sources, land value donations,

contractor donations and PF. Not every source is 100% confirmed at this point. However, PF has an exemplary track record of delivery and over-achievement of match commitments that further stretch OHF funding.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

We anticipate that all of the contract funding will be used for restoration, enhancement and initial development of the protected acres. This could include but is not limited to wetland/grassland restoration, tree removal, prescribed fire, building removal, parking lots, signage, and other development activities.

Travel

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?

-

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging

I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:

No

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

1.5% rate on \$498,500 (Personnel, Contracts, Travel, Professional Services)

Federal Funds

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

Yes

Is Confirmation Document attached?

[Yes](#)

- Cash : \$4,180,000
- In Kind : \$820,000

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	235	765	0	0	1,000
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	235	765	0	0	1,000

How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie? (Table 1b)

Type	Native Prairie (acres)
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	12
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	0
Total	12

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$1,292,500	\$4,207,500	-	-	\$5,500,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$1,292,500	\$4,207,500	-	-	\$5,500,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	29	132	0	839	0	1,000
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	29	132	0	839	0	1,000

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$159,500	\$726,000	-	\$4,614,500	-	\$5,500,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$159,500	\$726,000	-	\$4,614,500	-	\$5,500,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
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Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$5,500	\$5,500	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$5,500	\$5,500	-	\$5,500	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *Number of acres of wetlands and uplands protected and restored.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting ~ *Number and acres of wetlands protected and restored. Number of acquisitions that provide additional access to existing public lands.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species ~ *Number of acres of wetlands and uplands protected and restored.*

Parcels

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Schouviller WPA Addition	Becker	14141209	198	\$1,000,000	No
Warling Lake WPA Addition	Becker	14043236	40	\$125,000	No
Stinking Lake WPA	Becker	14043219	600	\$2,500,000	No
Kufrin WPA Addition	Big Stone	12245221	120	\$600,000	No
Rothi WPA Addition	Big Stone	12045211	232	\$1,200,000	No
Twin Lakes WPA Addition	Big Stone	12246235	215	\$1,075,000	No
Nelson WPA Addition	Big Stone	12144201	127	\$511,000	No
Hillman WPA Addition	Big Stone	12145216	158	\$632,000	No
Cobb WPA Addition	Blue Earth	10626214	35	\$200,000	No
Strom Lake WPA	Blue Earth	10829219	115	\$700,000	No
New WPA	Blue Earth	10729234	40	\$320,000	No
Lincoln WPA Addition	Blue Earth	10729230	86	\$605,000	No
Howard Farm WPA Addition	Blue Earth	10728216	80	\$500,000	No
Howard Farm WPA Addition	Blue Earth	10728210	100	\$700,000	No
Strom Lake WPA	Brown	10830224	130	\$800,000	No
Tiger Lake WPA Addition	Carver	11526209	83	\$655,000	No
Tiger Lake WPA Addition	Carver	11526215	115	\$800,000	No
Tiger Lake WPA Addition	Carver	11526209	153	\$900,000	No
Hoe Lake WPA Addition	Clay	13944211	168	\$478,500	No
Kenyon WPA Addition	Clay	13844207	115	\$322,300	Yes
Peterson WPA Addition	Douglas	12836219	91	\$300,000	No
Millerville WPA Addition	Douglas	13038206	60	\$250,000	No
Minnesota Lake WPA Addition	Faribault	10425212	40	\$280,000	No
String Lake Addition	Jackson	10436206	249	\$1,369,500	No
New WPA	Jackson	10237204	100	\$779,043	No
New WPA	Jackson	10236206	147	\$882,000	No
TBD WPA	Kandiyohi	11933206	90	\$275,000	No
Zwemke WPA Addition	Kandiyohi	12036222	26	\$115,000	No
Sweep WPA	Kandiyohi	12034220	50	\$200,000	No
Shakopee Creek WPA Addition	Kandiyohi	12036202	85	\$210,000	Yes
Freese WPA Addition	Kandiyohi	12236211	40	\$125,000	No
Big Stone WPA	Lac qui Parle	12046203	152	\$990,000	No
Beyer WPA Addition - 2	Lac qui Parle	12046234	230	\$1,150,000	No
Beyer WPA Addition - 1	Lac qui Parle	12046233	280	\$1,120,000	No
New WPA	Lincoln	11146228	80	\$550,000	No
Gislason Lake WPA Addition	Lincoln	11244235	160	\$804,700	No
Hansonville WPA	Lincoln	11346201	80	\$360,000	No

New WPA	Lincoln	11146208	160	\$960,000	No
New WPA	Lincoln	10944223	83	\$498,000	No
Island WPA	Lyon	11143207	142	\$570,200	Yes
Stofer WPA Addition	Lyon	11240214	160	\$960,000	No
Island WPA	Lyon	11143208	80	\$300,000	Yes
Island WPA	Lyon	11143208	86	\$300,000	No
Bendix WPA Addition	Lyon	10941221	45	\$160,000	No
Moore Lake WPA Addition	Mahnomen	14342214	980	\$2,100,000	No
Barber Lake WPA Addition	McLeod	11630227	120	\$900,000	No
Tyrone Flats WPA Addition	Meeker	12131223	80	\$320,000	No
New WPA	Murray	10839226	80	\$567,234	No
Mason WPA Addition	Murray	10741216	80	\$562,500	No
Bloom WPA Addition	Nobles	10441220	99	\$702,900	No
Putnam WPA Addition	Otter Tail	13743225	153	\$650,000	No
Julsrud WPA Addition	Otter Tail	13644205	136	\$250,000	No
Bjerkevedt WPA Addition	Otter Tail	13239228	59	\$117,800	No
Bangor WPA Addition	Pope	12436234	31	\$155,000	No
Wall WPA Addition	Pope	12437218	147	\$588,000	No
Sacred Heart WPA Addition	Renville	11537215	79	\$546,400	No
Erin Prairie WPA Addition 2	Rice	11122216	85	\$506,000	No
Erin Prairie WPA Addition	Rice	11122215	77	\$500,000	No
Straight River WPA Addition	Steele	10520222	212	\$1,300,000	No
Johnson WPA Addition	Stevens	12643206	232	\$928,000	No
Niemackl Slough WPA Addition	Stevens	12643210	31	\$155,000	No
Pepperton WPA Addition	Stevens	12543227	239	\$1,600,000	No
Gilbertson WPA Addition	Swift	12137209	102	\$505,000	No
Welsh WPA Addition	Swift	12238235	116	\$464,000	No
Byre WPA Addition	Swift	12243222	113	\$696,000	No
Loen WPA Addition	Swift	12238207	77	\$462,000	No
Svor WPA Addition	Swift	12238217	160	\$960,000	No
Lubenow WPA Addition	Swift	12243234	110	\$440,000	No
Mosquito Ranch Addition	Traverse	12548228	400	\$1,600,000	No
Silver Creek WPA Addition	Wright	12126201	70	\$280,000	No
Pelican Lake Addition	Wright	12125235	60	\$360,000	No

Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
New WPA	Jackson	10135231	562	\$4,502,800	No	2	\$14,000
Bendix WPA Addition	Lyon	10941220	17	\$85,000	No	3	\$0

