



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program - Phase X

Laws of Minnesota 2018 Final Report

General Information

Date: 05/13/2024

Project Title: Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program - Phase X

Funds Recommended: \$5,740,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2018, Ch. 208, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd 2(b)

Appropriation Language: \$5,740,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever to acquire in fee and restore lands for wildlife management under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquiring lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Sabin Adams

Title: Public Lands Manager

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Location Information

County Location(s): Douglas, Renville, Nobles, Fillmore, Meeker, Steele, Sibley, Martin and Carver.

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

Summary of Accomplishments

This phase of WMA acquisition protected 1,260.22 acres of prairie grassland, wetland, and other wildlife habitat as State Wildlife Management Areas open to public hunting. With these 9 acquisitions we have exceeded our planned acres of 1030 by more than 230.22 acres. All of the acquired properties had wildlife habitat restored to the highest quality possible.

Process & Methods

Loss of wetland and grassland habitat has contributed to the decline of native populations of flora and fauna, negatively impacted water quality, groundwater recharge and natural flood cycles. To reverse this trend, PF works to permanently protect and restore these wetland-grassland complexes. This phase of the WMA acceleration program acquired and restored a total of 1260.22 acres of grasslands and wetland habitat as permanently protected WMA's. Due to our ability to partner with other conservation groups and agencies such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, we are able to bring leverage to the program and far exceed the goals of this phase.

Pheasants Forever and MN DNR staff collaborated to generate a list of parcels with landowners who had the desire to sell. The parcel's ecological impact was evaluated using landscape level planning tools such as USFWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET), The MN Prairie Conservation Plan and The Pheasant Action Plan among others. By utilizing these tools, we were able to focus efforts in areas where acquisitions and restorations will make the greatest impact on the landscape and thus these additional acres of WMA are very beneficial to wildlife and public recreation.

Once acquired, wetlands on each parcel were restored by installing surface ditch "plugs" and or breaking subsurface tile. Some wetlands may also have had sediment removed to create proper substrates for wetland function and vegetative growth. Grasslands were restored by planting a high-diversity native seed mix of grasses and forbs that are regionally appropriate to the area. As with all restoration work, there are challenges that come from weather and working with private contractors, but we did not face any major issues.

How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?

A majority of the acquisitions in this program add to existing WMA habitat complexes which are strongholds for many species of wildlife including SGCN and T/E species. Increasing the size of these complexes improves the landscapes ability to support larger populations and provide connectivity between patches of habitat. All parcels are located in the Prairie Pothole Region which boasts the richest wetland system on earth and produces approximately one-third of the continents waterfowl population. The parcels acquired and restored as part of this phase add to the quantity and quality of grasslands and wetlands that are available to species such as mallards, black terns, bobolinks, meadowlarks, and the ring-necked pheasant. Additionally SGCN and T/E were considered when the parcels were evaluated for acquisition. Parcels with these species were ranked more favorably than parcels without. Species of concern that will benefit from these projects include the greater prairie chicken, short-eared owl, marsh hawk and yellow rail.

How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

All potential additions to the WMA system are developed, reviewed, and selected in conjunction with the MN DNR area managers and acquisition staff. Partners employ numerous planning and evaluation tools including the SWAAT scoring tool and USFWS HAPET modeling (thunderstorm maps) to identify quality habitat tracts that also meet recreational requirements. Additionally conservation plans such as the MN Prairie Conservation Plan and the Pheasant Action Plan, take corridors and complexes into account when creating focus areas. These focus areas are part of the evaluation process used to evaluate parcels for acquisition.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

We worked closely with the MN DNR to find and evaluate the best properties based on the criteria listed in the process and methods section. During the process, we also worked with many other partners to gauge interest levels and determine if the property is suitable for a Wildlife Management Area.

Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

Due to the outstanding collaboration between PF and our partners, no exceptional challenges or failures were experienced. These programs provide PF the opportunity to work with landowners wishing to sell their property as a way of leaving their own habitat legacy. We do this in the most accommodating and respectful way possible.

What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this program?

- N/A

What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All of the acquisitions have been fully restored and transferred to the MN DNR to be enrolled in the Wildlife Management Area program. The DNR is responsible for long-term maintenance of these WMA's.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2023 and beyond	Federal/Local/PF Chapters	PF will continue to work with partners to seek funding, where appropriate, to help maintain habitat quality on these acquisitions.	-	-

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$33,000	\$45,000	\$49,500	-	-	-	\$33,000	\$49,500
Contracts	\$514,400	\$494,500	\$468,300	-	\$7,600	PF, federal or private source	\$514,400	\$475,900
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$4,938,200	\$4,890,000	\$4,909,900	\$412,000	\$1,382,000	PF, federal or private source	\$5,350,200	\$6,291,900
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$3,300	\$3,300	\$3,500	-	-	-	\$3,300	\$3,500
Professional Services	\$109,500	\$130,000	\$128,000	-	\$13,300	PF, federal or private source	\$109,500	\$141,300
Direct Support Services	\$9,900	\$9,900	\$10,300	-	-	-	\$9,900	\$10,300
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$49,400	\$85,000	\$85,000	-	-	-	\$49,400	\$85,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$82,300	\$82,300	\$82,300	-	-	-	\$82,300	\$82,300
Grand Total	\$5,740,000	\$5,740,000	\$5,736,800	\$412,000	\$1,402,900	-	\$6,152,000	\$7,139,700

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF State Coordinator - MN	0.03	3.0	\$12,300	-	-	\$12,300
PF Field Staff	0.06	3.0	\$18,600	-	-	\$18,600
PF Grant Staff	0.06	3.0	\$18,600	-	-	\$18,600

Direct Support Services

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

PF utilizes the Total Modified Direct Cost method. This methodology is annually approved by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Business Center as the basis for the organization's Indirect Cost Rate agreement. PF's allowable direct support services cost is 4.12%. In this proposal, PF has discounted its rate to 1.5% of the sum of personnel, contracts, professional services, and travel. We are donating the difference-in-kind.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Fluctuations in land prices, projects that start but then sellers decline, restoration price fluctuations, inflation, increased DNR review etc. all make budgeting for these projects at the time of proposal very difficult. Our other partners, most notably the NAWCA program, provide us with leverage toward Fee Acquisition w/PILT but very little support with other categories, including personnel. By leveraging these funds we can accomplish more projects and deliver more acres, but we rely on OHF to be flexible for us to meet other budget constraints. Final personnel/dss, including program income, is 1.44% of the total appropriation.

Total Revenue: \$54,639

Revenue Spent: \$54,639

Revenue Balance: \$0

Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

Itemize out how the revenues were spent:

Supplies and Materials - \$144.36

Land Taxes - \$31,384.00

Personnel - \$23,111.51

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	175	259	855	1,001	0	0	0	0	1,030	1,260
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	175	259	855	1,001	0	0	0	0	1,030	1,260

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

Type	Native Prairie (AP)	Native Prairie (Final)
Restore	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	16	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0
Enhance	0	0
Total	16	0

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$975,200	\$1,181,600	\$4,764,800	\$4,555,200	-	-	-	-	\$5,740,000	\$5,736,800
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$975,200	\$1,181,600	\$4,764,800	\$4,555,200	-	-	-	-	\$5,740,000	\$5,736,800

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	41	103	165	0	0	0	824	1,157	0	0	1,030	1,260
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	41	103	165	0	0	0	824	1,157	0	0	1,030	1,260

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/ Urban (AP)	Metro/ Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$228,500	\$470,200	\$919,500	-	-	-	\$4,592,000	\$5,266,600	-	-	\$5,740,000	\$5,736,800
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$228,500	\$470,200	\$919,500	-	-	-	\$4,592,000	\$5,266,600	-	-	\$5,740,000	\$5,736,800

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

Our leverage, particularly from federal NAWCA, provided extra funds to acquire 230 more acres than proposed.

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 ~ *We did not purchase any WMAs in the forest-prairie transition under this phase.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting ~ *We acquired 103.29 acres in the metro region. All acres are permanently protected as WMAs open to the public. Additionally we restored as many wetlands as feasible with the funding available.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *We acquired 1,156.93 acres in the prairie region. All habitat benefiting fish game and other wildlife were restored to the greatest extent feasible with regard to funding and timing available.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

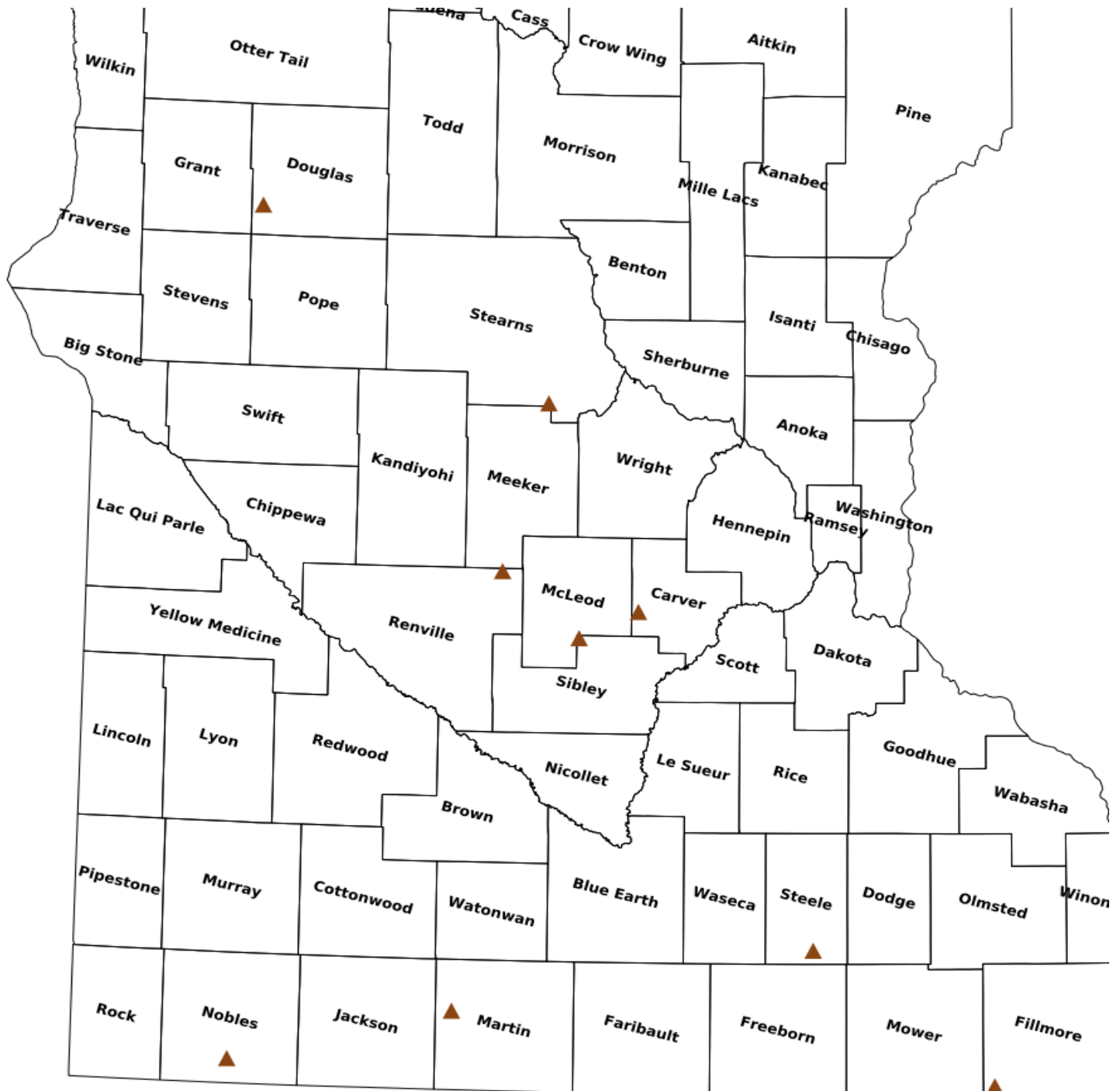
Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Beaver Creek WMA Addition	Fillmore	10113228	53	\$120,000	No
Caron WMA Addition	Martin	10333222	142	\$940,000	No
Powers Lake WMA	Meeker	12230236	6	\$40,000	No
Boon Lake WMA Addition	Renville	11631205	162	\$1,100,000	No
Bob Gehlen WMA Addition	Sibley	11428206	40	\$225,000	No
Straight River WMA Addn	Steele	10520223	198	\$625,000	No

Fee Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Tiger Marsh T7 WMA Addition	Carver	11526208	103	\$650,000	No	4	\$81,000
Roy Thompson WMA Addition	Douglas	12740204	259	\$800,000	No	3	\$15,000
Ransom Ridge WMA Addition	Nobles	10141209	297	\$1,500,000	No	2	\$0

Parcel Map



0 11 22 33 mi

- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ✚ Other