



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Shallow Lake & Wetland Protection & Restoration Program - Phase VII

Laws of Minnesota 2018 Final Report

General Information

Date: 04/01/2025

Project Title: Shallow Lake & Wetland Protection & Restoration Program - Phase VII

Funds Recommended: \$4,770,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2018, Ch. 208, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd 4(b)

Appropriation Language: \$4,770,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Ducks Unlimited to acquire lands in fee and to restore and enhance prairie lands, wetlands, and land buffering shallow lakes for wildlife management under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8. A list of proposed acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

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Location Information

County Location(s): Big Stone, Kandiyohi, Martin and Murray.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Prairie

Activity types:

Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

Ducks Unlimited spent 98% of this ML2018 OHF appropriation and completed the fee-title purchase of four land parcels totaling 607 acres for MNDNR, exceeding our 550-acre grant goals as follows: 233-acre Steinke Tract on the north side of 5,000-acre Marsh Lake on Lac Qui Parle WMA in Big Stone County; 64-acre Erickson Tract on Whitefield WMA in Kandiyohi County; 151-acre Kramer/Tenhassen Farms Tract on Seymour Lake WMA in Martin County; and 159-acre Stoderl Tract to create the new Stoderl Slough WMA in Murray County. DU also restored each parcel through this appropriation with help from MNDNR field staff.

Process & Methods

In this Phase 7 of our prairie land protection program in Minnesota, Ducks Unlimited (DU) acquired and restored land with drained wetlands adjacent to existing public lands and shallow lakes for inclusion in the Minnesota DNR's State Wildlife Management Area (WMA) system. DU focused on the acquisition and restoration of lands with restorable wetlands and prairie adjacent to existing WMAs to create functioning prairie-wetland habitat complexes for wildlife and public use. This work addresses the habitat goals in Minnesota's Long-range Duck Recovery Plan, Minnesota's Prairie Conservation Plan, and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. This work was time sensitive because farmland adjacent to state WMAs is rarely offered for sale for conservation, and tracts are only available for a short time. DU worked in close partnership with the Minnesota DNR Section of Wildlife to identify land tracts for sale of importance to DNR and of significance to wildlife, once restored and protected. DU then hired professional licensed consultant appraisers to determine fair market land value, and purchased land from willing sellers private landowners.

DU negotiated two bargain sale purchase prices saving \$29,000, and paid full appraised value for the other two parcels. In each case, DU provided written communication to county boards informing them of our land purchase plans at least 30 days before closing, and addressed county board and township board questions as they arose to further explain our conservation work. No formal objections were made, and all concerns resolved. Following acquisition, DU professional biologists and engineers worked closely with Minnesota DNR field staff to plan and implement both robust prairie and wetland restorations, including diverse native forb/grass seed plantings and complex wetland restorations that required extensive drainage system modifications and expensive sediment removal to restore functioning wetlands for prairie wildlife. Competitive low-bid private contractors were selected to perform restoration earth moving work to restore wetland hydrology, and to remove subsurface drainage tile, sediment, and invasive trees. Minnesota DNR field staff seeded uplands back to native prairie grasslands with abundant pollinator forbs using seed purchased with OHF grant funds. Each of the four land tracts has been successfully transferred to the Minnesota DNR and into the State WMA system, and are fully open to public use, including hunting.

This conservation work was especially important because Minnesota has lost 90% of our prairie wetlands to drainage and 99% of our prairie uplands to cultivation and other land uses. Acquisition and restoration of small wetlands and prairie is critically needed here, especially for breeding waterfowl and other birds in the Prairie Pothole Region of SW Minnesota where DU is focused. The few remaining prairie wetlands and shallow lakes contained within state WMAs or federal Waterfowl Production Areas rarely provide enough optimal wildlife habitat for birds to reproduce due to their small, fragmented size and isolated juxtaposition.

Acquisition/restoration drained wetlands and cultivated prairie adjacent to existing public lands and public waters helps create functioning prairie-wetland complexes of habitat for wildlife that are open for public use too.

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?

This program protected and restored prairie uplands and emergent wetlands, which are identified as critical habitats for many “Species of Greatest Conservation Need” listed in Minnesota’s “Tomorrow’s Habitat for the Wild & Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife.” Specific species listed in the Action Plan as requiring prairie (page 255) include seven species of butterflies and three bird species that are native prairie specialists: chestnut-collared longspur, Sprague’s pipit, and Baird’s sparrow. In addition to these specific wildlife species listed as SGCN examples in the Action Plan, restored prairie in the Prairie Parkland will provide habitat of significant value for other species listed in Appendix B of the Action Plan too. Restored and protected prairie will provide habitat of significant value for other SGCN including bird species: upland sandpiper, bobolink, burrowing owl, Le conte’s sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, eastern meadowlark, swamp sparrow, sharp-tailed grouse, short-eared owl, northern harrier, dickcissel, Henslow’s sparrow, and Nelson’s sharp-tailed sparrow. Upland nesting waterfowl will also benefit including waterfowl listed as SGCN; northern pintail and lesser scaup, which have both seen declines in continental populations. Wetland associated birds such as trumpeter swan, black tern, American bittern, Wilson’s phalarope, and marbled godwit will benefit from wetlands either restored or buffered in the prairie landscape. In short, most of the wildlife species listed as SGCN in the Action Plan need the same restored prairie wetlands and grasslands that waterfowl and other game species need, and acquisition and restoration of wetlands and prairie grasslands adjacent to existing state Wildlife Management Areas often benefits both game and nongame species alike when restored correctly and fully as Ducks Unlimited always strives to do and achieved through this grant.

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.

Ducks Unlimited used science-based targeting to evaluate land acquisitions, and focused on tracts adjacent to existing state WMAs with restorable wetlands that enlarged prairie-wetland habitat complexes. Science-based models such as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) “Thunderstorm Maps” and “Restorable Wetlands Inventory” helped us determine landscape importance to breeding waterfowl. We prioritize parcels with relatively high biological diversity and significance based on the Minnesota DNR County Biological Survey (MCBS).

Examples include: Our acquisition and restoration of three land parcels totaling 261 acres on Indian Lake WMA in Sibley County adjacent to Indian Lake, a shallow lake with a high level MCBS biological significance and moderate biodiversity significance, buffered Indian Lake and increased the size of the WMA to support breeding wildlife. Our acquisition and restoration of land on Lac Qui Parle WMA adjacent to Marsh Lake in Big Stone County restored much-needed uplands and small wetlands to help improve a prairie-wetland complex in an area estimated as capable of supporting over 30 breeding pairs of waterfowl per square mile. In each case, our land acquisition and restoration work both buffers existing state WMAs while also enlarging the overall prairie wetland wildlife habitat complex features in the general landscape as well.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

DU partnered primarily with the Minnesota DNR Section of Wildlife within the Fish & Wildlife Division, but enjoyed support from the counties within which we worked and from other private partners to help restore lands acquired too, including the Fox Lake Conservation League, the Bame Foundation, Flint Hills Resources, and a federal North American Wetlands Conservation Act/Council.

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

Our main challenge was restoring land with drained wetlands involving complex subsurface drainage systems that involved private drainage from neighbors and required both accommodation and new drainage agreements with

neighbors, all of which was accomplished but which required extensive engineering survey, tile investigations, and design time. On Seymour Lake WMA in Martin County, the land we purchased required the exclusion of a hog barn building site at the landowner's request, which we accommodated but which complicated the parcel acquired and restored. Nonetheless, DU successfully exceeded our land acquisition and restoration goals, and all four parcels have been successfully and fully restored and are open for public use through the state's Wildlife Management Area system, including public hunting and other forms of wildlife-compatible outdoor recreation.

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 four land tracts have been fully restored and transferred to the Minnesota DNR for long-term management and public use as part of the state Wildlife Management Area system of public lands.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2022	MN DNR Game & Fish Fund	Monitor and maintain lands acquired and restored	Manage lands, including periodic noxious weed control and burning	Maintain WMA signs and public access, including for hunting

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$290,000	\$215,000	\$190,600	\$20,000	\$124,800	DU private funds, DU private and federal NAWCA	\$310,000	\$315,400
Contracts	\$500,000	\$730,000	\$720,300	\$50,000	\$50,000	DU private and federal NAWCA	\$550,000	\$770,300
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$3,500,000	\$3,363,800	\$3,363,800	-	\$29,000	Private landowner donations	\$3,500,000	\$3,392,800
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$40,000	\$20,000	\$8,700	-	\$10,900	DU private and federal NAWCA	\$40,000	\$19,600
Professional Services	\$90,000	\$65,400	\$66,500	-	\$21,300	DU private and federal NAWCA	\$90,000	\$87,800
Direct Support Services	\$30,000	\$18,800	\$15,200	-	-	-	\$30,000	\$15,200
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$31,200	-	-	-	\$50,000	\$31,200
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$20,000	\$5,500	\$600	-	\$100	DU private funds	\$20,000	\$700
Supplies/Materials	\$50,000	\$5,500	\$600	\$10,000	\$100	DU private funds	\$60,000	\$700
DNR IDP	\$200,000	\$296,000	\$287,000	-	-	-	\$200,000	\$287,000
Grand Total	\$4,770,000	\$4,770,000	\$4,684,500	\$80,000	\$236,200	-	\$4,850,000	\$4,920,700

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Manager - Grant administration and DU land acquisition program coordination	1.0	3.0	\$20,000	\$6,600	DU private funds	\$26,600
Biologists, Realty Specialist, and Engineers - Purchase, Transfer, and Restore land	2.0	3.0	\$170,600	\$118,200	DU private and federal NAWCA	\$288,800

Direct Support Services

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

Minnesota DNR grants staff previously reviewed and approved DU accounting methodology for Direct Support Services, which are calculated and included in DU staff costs. DU Direct Support Services constitute approximately

10% of DU overall staff costs on average among DU conservation staff billing categories. DU breaks out and invoices for Direct Support Service expenses approved by DNR for reimbursement separately from Personnel expenses. In accordance with 2 CFR 200, DU uses the direct allocation method of allocating costs to

programs and final cost objectives. This process of allocating costs is accomplished through the use of hourly rates. The direct cost of activities, including direct support expenses, is included in these hourly rates. The rates are comprised of costs for salaries, benefits, office space, general insurance, support staff, office supplies, and other various direct expenses incurred at the regional offices and conservation department at the home office. All costs are assigned to conservation projects (net of applicable personnel and other costs that are non-conservation related.) Hourly charges represent the amount that DU charges conservation projects per hour for each staff member working on the project. These costs represent expenses that directly support the labor cost necessary for the development of a specific water/wetlands conservation project.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

DU successfully spent all but \$112,262 of our OHF grant funds while exceeded our grant acre goal. Notably, DU successfully used our OHF expense to leverage more federal NAWCA grant funds for Personnel costs than anticipated, exceeding the amount of Personal leverage pledged (\$20,000) by 616% by instead leveraging \$123,300. Overall, our non-state leverage was \$236,200, which is 2.95 times as much as the \$80,000 in estimated leverage that we pledged back in 2017. This resulted in a return of \$105,739 in unspent OHF grant funds returned to the State of Minnesota OHF.

Total Revenue: \$0

Revenue Spent: \$0

Revenue Balance: \$0

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

E. This is not applicable as there was no revenue generated.

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	150	143	400	464	0	0	0	0	550	607
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	150	143	400	464	0	0	0	0	550	607

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	5	50
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0
Enhance	0	0
Total	5	50

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	\$1,300,000	\$1,103,600	\$3,470,000	\$3,580,900	-	-	-	-	\$4,770,000	\$4,684,500
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$1,300,000	\$1,103,600	\$3,470,000	\$3,580,900	-	-	-	-	\$4,770,000	\$4,684,500

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	0	0	0	0	0	0	550	607	0	0	550	607
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	0	0	0	0	0	0	550	607	0	0	550	607

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$4,770,000	\$4,684,500	-	-	\$4,770,000	\$4,684,500
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$4,770,000	\$4,684,500	-	-	\$4,770,000	\$4,684,500

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

DU exceeded our 550 acre goal by 67 acres or 10% by protecting a total of 607 acres. While we fell seven (7) acres short of our wetland protection acre goal, we exceeded our prairie upland acre goal by 64 acres. DU also conservatively protected 50 acres of native wet prairie on the 233-acre Steinke Tract on Lac Qui Parle WMA, according to the Minnesota DNR, which is 10 times the 5 acres we estimated we could protect back in 2017.

Outcomes

Programs in prairie region:

Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *This outcome is measured simply by the sheer number of wetland and prairie acres acquired for protection and restored or enhanced through this appropriation. DU exceeded our acre acquisition/protection goal, thereby successfully accomplishment this outcome.*

Parcels

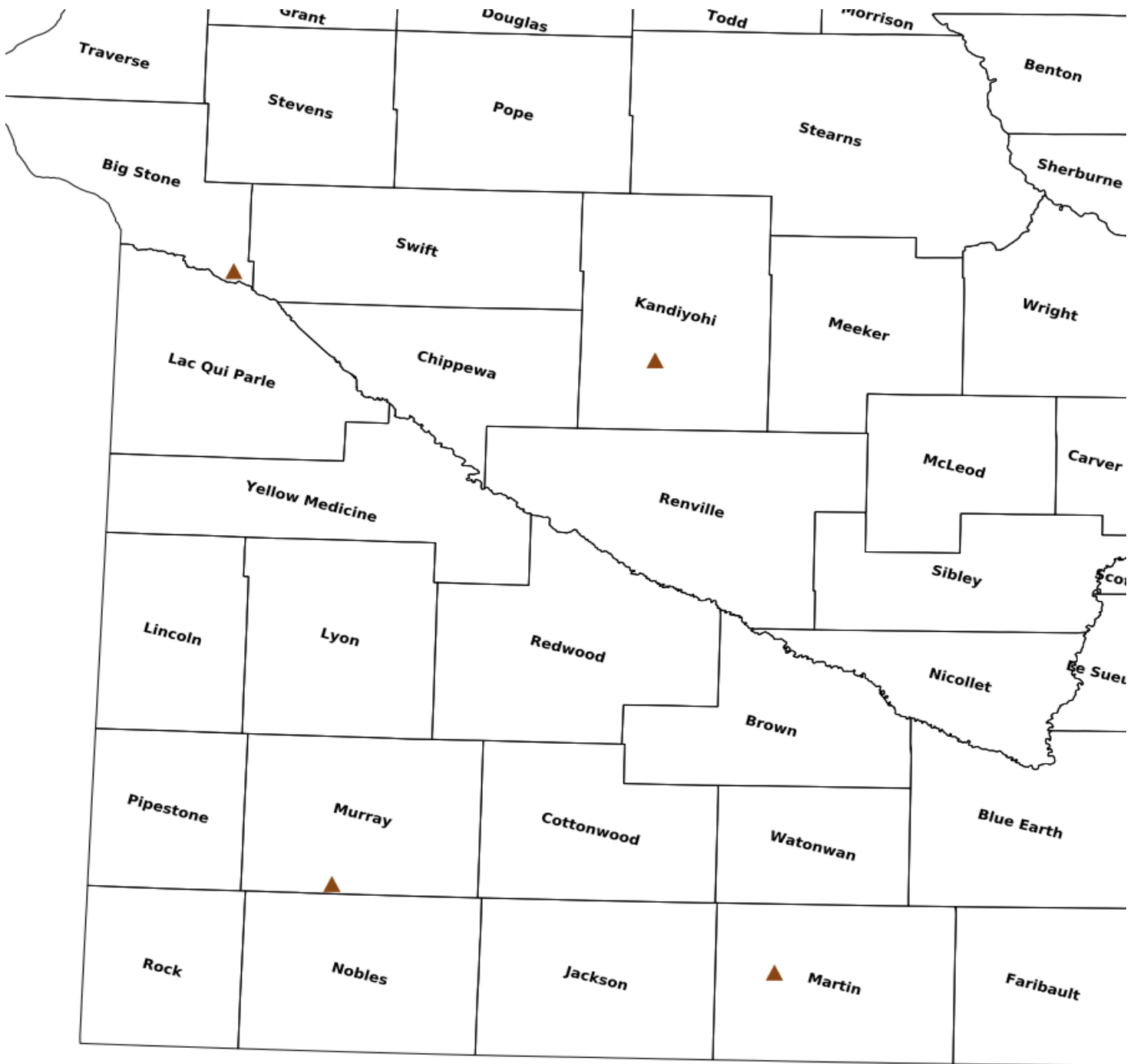
Sign-up Criteria?

No

Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Lac qui Parle WMA - Tract TB15 Steinke/Hoffman	Big Stone	12044210	233	\$1,233,000	No
Whitefield WMA - Tract 2	Kandiyohi	11835210	64	\$360,000	No
Seymour Lake WMA - Tract 3 Tenhassen Farms KrahmerFarms	Martin	10332229	151	\$1,140,000	No
Stoderl Slough WMA	Murray	10542225	159	\$630,784	No

Parcel Map



0 7 14 21 mi

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